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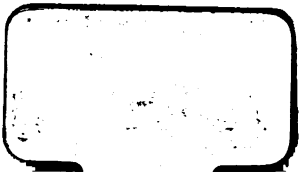

THE

MAN IN CHAINS

BY

C. J. COLLINS

AUTHOR OF "SACKVILLE CHASE," "SINGED MOTHS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONDON

JOHN MAXWELL AND COMPANY

122, FLEET STREET

MDCCCLXIV

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CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	GRAY'S INN AND ITS NEW MEMBER . .	1
II.	MISERRIMUS	24
III.	A CRY OF MURDER IN THE CITY . . .	52
IV.	"THERE IS THAT CREATURE AGAIN, PAPA. LET US GO HOME"	78
V.	VISCOUNT MONTALBAN AND HIS DAUGHTER AT HOME	100
VI.	SILVESTER LANGDALE'S FIRST BRIEF . .	126
VII.	A BOUDOIR NEAR TO KENSINGTON GARDENS	146
VIII.	SILVESTER LANGDALE'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN COURT	166
IX.	THE TRIAL OF ABEL BARNES	189
X.	SILVESTER LANGDALE'S NEW CLERK . .	211
XI.	SILVESTER LANGDALE DINES WITH VISCOUNT MONTALBAN	234

CHAP. PAGE

XII. MISS MONTALBAN AND SILVESTER LANGDALE 254

XIII. SILVESTER LANGDALE FORGES HIS FIRST CHAIN 274

XIV. THE YOUNG BARRISTER TAKES ABEL BARNES INTO HIS CONFIDENCE AND HIS SERVICE. — SEVERN BARNES IS HEARD A LITTLE MORE CONSPICUOUSLY IN THIS HISTORY 293

THE MAN IN CHAINS

CHAPTER I.

GRAY'S INN AND ITS NEW MEMBER.

GRAY'S INN LANE is not in appearance suggestive of hedgerows and wild flowers, the creeping convolvulus or the prickly briar. It is wretched and miserable in winter, it is like an oven in summer. It can never put forth a green leaf, even if it had any trees along its course, which it has not; and it is not probable that it will be ever anything else than what it is, —a leading thoroughfare, narrow, squalid, and dirty. On each side are the dusty and dilapidated remnants of a past age— an age which succeeded that in which,

before Gray's Inn Lane became a street, a sylvan nook, a real country green lane existed, running through verdant fields, redolent in the spring-time of the perfume of the cowslip, and shining in the freshness of a brilliant verdure. But that, of course, was long before the vast metropolis of the British empire began, like some huge reptile, to stretch its feelers out, and to remorselessly devour the country all around it.

But although Gray's Inn Lane is not only not attractive, but is actually repulsive—although its houses on either side seem to threaten each other with a gloomy defiance, which is strangely blended with a kind of drowsy indifference as to whether they should fall together into the thoroughfare, and so block it up, and thus be each self-destroying in their neighbourly hatred; or gradually, by torpid and almost imperceptible advances, form

an intimate junction with their frowning roofs, and thus completely shut out the light of heaven, which now but struggles to find an entrance there;—although such be the existing condition of Gray's Inn Lane, yet may we, by the simple exertion of making but a few strides, effect a change around us as effectual as that which a wizard might have produced when wizards were in the plenitude of their power, and roamed about this earth seeking whom they might transform,—a change as marked and striking, and as pleasing, as that which is effected by the aid of the ubiquitous harlequin at Christmas-time; a change from the debased reality of the back slum of a great city, to a glorious picture fresh from nature's fairest scenes.

As we walk down Gray's Inn Lane, with its frowning grimness on either side —more frowning, more grim, more repulsive on one side than the other—we

might, by the agency of a transforming wand in the shape of some stout pickaxe, break through into a sylvan scene, where flowers flourish, where the grass grows thickly and luxuriantly green, and where great trees stretch out their giant arms as glorifying the heavens above them, even as though they were high towering above some rural glade where smoke and dust and noxious vapours have not penetrated.

Yes, spite of its evil fumes and reeking kennels, its pent-up fever haunts, its filth, its misery, the degradation of its cabined toilers, there are green spots in the very midst of this great London, which prove that heaven had blessed the spot before the hand of man defaced the scene, and that still the blessing lingers even above the place where the spirit of miasma reigns.

A dingy room, up three flights of ancient stairs, scantily furnished, the

walls wainscoted and bare, looks out upon the tops of the tall trees that flourish in Gray's Inn Square. This room has been but recently tenanted by its present occupant, a young man of three-and-twenty, who is a barrister-at-law of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, by whom he has just been called to that distinction. It is a summer evening, and the two windows of the chamber are open, and through them comes a strange admixture of incongruous sounds. The roar of that mighty stream that rolls for ever up and down High Holborn is heard above the rest, like the beating of the breaking surf upon the sea-shore when equinoctial gales are prevalent, and ships go down at sea. It is a roar that is unlike that upon the sea-shore in this respect, that while the sea is sometimes calm, the tide that simultaneously flows both ways in the great gulf-streams that run from east to

west of London is unceasing, and for ever thundering. Its roar comes in at the open windows of the room in Gray's Inn Square, and it is blended with the prattle of light-hearted children, who are gambolling beneath the great trees that make the spot anomalous, and shrill cries are heard from neighbouring offshoots of the mighty stream; and if we listen at the window now on this calm summer evening, distinct from the rolling roar, the merry laughter, and the shrill cries, we hear, like the faint echo of a fairy's revelry, the soothing hum of the plodding bee; for on the next window-sill are flowers trained, flowers that are rich in sweet aroma which has attracted—whence?—that solitary bee, whose hum makes the whole scene a strange anomaly indeed.

We have to commence our story in the room that looks out upon the tops of the great trees that are in Gray's Inn Square,

for the occupant thereof is to be our hero. It is he who is to be our MAN IN CHAINS —those chains that no man can ever see, but which are clanking in every thoroughfare and in every crowd; clanking with a sound that none can hear, although it can be felt; clanking in the senate, on the judgment-seat, amidst the scenes of revelry and mirth, beneath the surplice of the high ecclesiastic, and the coronet of the great patrician; clanking amidst the jingle of tinselled fashion; everywhere clanking with a sound that none can hear, and yet which vibrates to the very heart, and sometimes blights it.

Our representative MAN IN CHAINS is Silvester Langdale. He is, as we have already said, twenty-three years of age; he has just been called to the bar; he is utterly without patronage; he knows nobody in London; and his stock of money is almost as limited as the circle of his

friends. He has resources within himself, which, however, can scarcely be said to be all within himself, because they are not wholly dependent upon himself. If they were, he might with truth aver that he was rich in resources. The gem in "the dark unfathomed caves of ocean" is of as much intrinsic worth as when it shines upon the bosom of an empress, for its light and glory are unchanged and unchangeable. We can see that light and glory when the jewel shines upon the imperial breast, but we do not know of its existence even, when the green waves roll over it and hide it from mortal eyes.

So in the ocean of society. Down in its dark unfathomed caves are gems of thought within the human mind, and which extraneous circumstances have shut out from the surrounding intellect of all the world. Such gems had Silvester Langdale discovered in his own mind before he had

ventured into London. He had passed them through the alembic of his brain, and they had issued brilliantly, but they were not shining upon the world as yet.

Silvester Langdale had been for some years an usher in a school in which he had previously been a pupil. It was in a quaint old city that is historically renowned in close connexion with England's greatness from the earliest times. Its cathedral is one of the grand memorials of an ancient day, when poetry would seem to have been blended with material architecture, and when the genius of the few shone like a solitary star amid the dark ignorance of the many.

The city in which Silvester Langdale had passed his youth contained one of those noble monuments of the forgotten past. In regal troubles that city had been conspicuous, and it has the bones of kings enshrined within its sanctuary.

Lingering in its byways, in quaint preservation, are houses in which subject citizens of Queen Elizabeth were born, lived, and died; and the strangely fashioned roofs of those old edifices suggest with silent eloquence strange scenes historical that have often been enacted in the streets below. Old men and women who were born in the quaint old city, and who have never left it, although the potent scatterer—the creation of modern days—has carried its magic wheels in all directions from the old city, still hand down traditions that they received from their grandsires, of how, in Cromwell's time, the streets ran red with blood when the great fight occurred; and they will point out where the exact spot is in which the fugitive Charles made his last stand, and commenced his last flight; and so, from age to age, imagination doubtless has em-

bellished facts which sound like romance now.

The school in which Silvester Langdale had passed his youth was situated in one of the by-streets in the old city,—the oldest street in that old city,—and it was in the oldest house in that ancient street. And that old house was in itself an archæological curiosity. It was surmounted by a great roof of black timber, with heavy eaves deep enough to shelter big artillery, if it could be placed there, and having at each end a great towering gable. But the roof was not the only portion of the house that was overhanging, for every story overhung the one beneath it, so that the big old house completely overshadowed the narrow street. Across each story, stretching the whole length of the house, was a range of windows diamond-paned, and above them in the walls were massive black beams standing vertically in the

white plaster of which the walls were composed. Nor was the interior of the house less quaint and striking. The chief entrance was at the side, a massive black, frowning gateway, with two ponderous wooden doors, like the portals of a cathedral, in one of which was a smaller door which was used as the entrance to the court-yard of the house, for the great doors of the vast gateway were never opened. The door leading from the court-yard into the house itself had a great porch with stone seats on each side, and there was a knocker on the door that looked more like a huge hammer than anything else, and which, when used, made the old house reverberate with ghostly echoes. The grand staircase within the house was something wonderful to look upon. It extended nearly the whole depth of the house, and was wide enough for a company of soldiers to march

up the shallow stairs, six abreast. Indeed, amongst the traditions of the old place there was one concerning a troop of Royalists who did once flock up those great stairs and down again, just before the royal Charles took his way through the eastern gate of the city, and was no more a king. The great schoolroom was panelled with ancient oak, and about that old room there was a charm for every student in it, for therein the mighty Cromwell once held a council, and dictated orders that for a time extinguished Royalty in all these realms.

Such was the establishment in which Silvester Langdale had passed his youth. As a child he had been sent to the school, but the principal of the school never knew whence the boy came, or with whom he was connected. A mysterious person had left the child in his care, and the necessary *honorarium* was agreed upon; the stipend

for a year or two was regularly kept up, and then it suddenly ceased. But the old pedagogue had come to love the boy, —the old man had married in his youth, but his wife and child were snatched away from him years and years ago,—and he had adopted Silvester Langdale as his own son, and he had carefully trained that child to manhood; and that little old man—he is very short and very round, and his face is very plump, and he has a glorious double chin, and his venerable old head is entirely bald—is with Silvester Langdale in the poorly furnished room that looks out upon the tops of the great trees that are in Gray's Inn Square.

There is no consanguinity between that venerable man and Silvester Langdale, and yet, from the scene that is taking place, one might fancy that the nearest ties of blood bound them indissolubly together. The old man has fallen upon

Langdale's breast, and is weeping like a child.

"It is the first time," he says, "that we have been separated. Henceforth the course of our two lives must be asunder. May yours, my boy, be onward towards a brilliant future."

"And your own?" inquired the young man, the big tears glistening in his eyes as he spoke;—they would have their way, and so they coursed rapidly down his cheeks.

"And mine!" cried the old man; "what matters it of mine? My course is nearly run."

"You will always let me call the old house my home?" said Silvester Langdale, taking his friend's hand in both his own.

The schoolmaster could only press Langdale to his heart, but the action was more eloquent than words.

It was that afternoon that Silvester

Langdale had for the first time been made acquainted with the history of his childhood. His old guardian and instructor, whom he had looked upon hitherto as a father, had informed him that evening what their actual relative positions were, and Silvester Langdale had in that revelation been almost overwhelmed with a feeling somewhat akin to that a person might experience in the loss of a fond and attached parent. And yet Silvester had always known that Nicholas Darvill, the old schoolmaster in whose house he had lived, was not his father; but until the evening of which we speak he had never known what their actual connexion was. Silvester Langdale had always spoken of and addressed the old man as Mr. Darvill simply. It is true that in the ancient city—for scandal is always rife in ancient cities—there were those who sometimes talked of old Mr. Darvill

and his pupil usher, and they would smile as they did so, and make disparaging allusions, and remark that it was no uncommon thing for rackety young fellows, who had been wild in their youth—not to say reprobates and unprincipled deceivers, when they were young,—to turn out, as they advanced in life, sedate and steady citizens, and estimable characters. It was true that nobody could remember even any suspicions of years long passed away against old Nicholas Darvill, but then the captious scandalmongers would argue amongst themselves that folks did not trouble to remember current scandals of half a century ago; and after such deprecatory inuendoes they would invariably come to the conclusion, that whatever had been the errors of his youth —thus assuming that they had been conclusively proved,—Nicholas Darvill had been an estimable citizen, a strictly

moral character, and an inoffensive neighbour.

Nicholas Darvill had always been proud of his *protégé*, and he had watched his expanding abilities as they had developed themselves, with a satisfaction which filled his heart and soul. When Silvester first expressed a desire to follow the legal profession, Nicholas Darvill had warmly supported the choice; albeit he did so with many misgivings, seeing that the bar, as he knew, was a profession that is near akin in its nature to a lottery. There are brilliant prizes in its magic wheel, and there are many of them; but how many hundreds of aspirants are there who sink before their prime into hopeless oblivion, without ever having had the opportunity of even trying one chance in the magic wheel, or one grasp at fortune through its agency! All this did Nicholas Darvill feel and know, and once he

ventured to hint his doubts and fears to Silvester, but the young man was so ardent, and so hopeful, and so enthusiastic about the bright future that his imagination drew, that the old man joyfully allowed those pleasing hopes to have their fullest play,—not the less so, perhaps, that he himself felt that he was gradually becoming their willing slave too.

And so the means were saved by Silvester Langdale's own exertions—oh, how proudly did old Nicholas Darvill proclaim that fact to all who might be interested in the declaration!—for him to become a member of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, and in due course his "call" had taken place, and it was to see him installed in his new profession —it was well that both the old man and the young one were very sanguine in their hopes—that Nicholas Darvill had come up to London.

"My boy, the time is almost at hand when I must take my course back to my solitary home in the old house," says the old man, with a very palpable nervous affection about the region of the throat.

Silvester Langdale presses the old man's hand again, and turns to prepare himself to accompany him to the railway-station not far off. Nicholas Darvill knows that this is the intention of the young barrister, and he hastily exclaims—

"No, no, Silvester, you shall not accompany me. I can and will go alone."

Silvester Langdale is about to offer some emphatic remonstrance, but the old man continues—

"I am determined to go alone, Silvester. Indulge an old man's whim," and the tears come into his eyes as he speaks. "I am a poor old man, weak and foolish, perhaps;" and he tried to speak cheerily, but the effort only partially succeeded.

"I would rather go alone, and for this reason, Silvester—if I leave you in this room I shall remember the separation all the more vividly. I could not bear to see you on the railway platform, amongst a crowd, as the train carried me off into the darkness of the night and the solitude of my own thoughts. Farewell, my boy. Yield me this little boon, and let me leave you now. God bless you, and may His blessing and fortune smile upon you."

And the old man was gone, leaving Silvester Langdale standing in the centre of the chamber as one that was partially stupefied. He had yielded to the old man's desire, but his loving guardian had scarcely quitted the room when a sudden impulse seized upon the young man. He would follow Nicholas Darvill unobserved to the railway-station, and watch him to the last. Acting upon this impulse, he snatched up his hat, and had opened the

door to proceed down the staircase, when he was met by a fair-haired, handsome boy of about fourteen, who was the bearer of a note addressed to Silvester Langdale, Esq., Barrister-at-Law. It was written upon coarse and soiled paper, but in the corner Silvester recognised a well-known autograph. He hastily read the contents of the note, which were brief, for a trembling hand had scrawled the following—

"I have but just ascertained where you are to be found, and there may be time yet. You have never witnessed a death-bed scene; it will be some relief to my closing anguish if you will come and witness mine. I am upon my death-bed. Privation has done its worst, and I see a pauper's grave yawning by my side. For Heaven's sake, come to me before I sink. I am conscious that these are the

last lines my hand will ever trace. For God's sake, come to me, and relieve the anguish of one who signs himself truly,

"MISERRIMUS."

The autograph, as we have said, was on the superscription of the note, and Silvester Langdale told the bearer of the letter that he would follow him immediately.

He did so.

CHAPTER II.

MISERRIMUS.

SILVESTER LANGDALE intimated to the fair-haired messenger that he would at once accompany him to the abode of the writer of the note that he had just delivered, and he followed the boy down the stairs into the public thoroughfare in front of Gray's Inn Buildings. It was now deepening twilight, but Silvester Langdale had a better opportunity of observing the appearance of the boy than when he was on the darkened landing outside the chamber in Gray's Inn. He was a bright, fresh-coloured, intelligent-looking boy, with fair, curly locks and bright blue eyes, and he

spoke with a remarkably pleasing voice. The general character of his attire was altogether out of keeping with his fair, round face; for while his flowing hair had evidently been well tended, and his face was clean, his clothes were ragged and patched, and they looked as though they were much soiled, although in reality such was not the case; but they had been so much brushed, that all the vestiges of anything like nap had been worn off the cloth of which his jacket was composed, and so it looked brown and dusty, although its original hue had been black. His trousers were patched at the bottom of the legs with pieces which formed a very bad match to the original material; and his boots were fearfully down at heel; indeed, they might be truthfully described as being out at heel, even as his scanty jacket was out at elbows. On his head he wore a covering which had once been a

cap, but which now, from its limpness, looked much like a loose black bag that had been discarded by some gatherer of trifles. It was that cap which seemed to complete the general ragged appearance of the boy; and the cap alone, to say nothing of his poor boots, would have been sufficient to have ensured him a bad character in any part of the great world of London. Spite, however, of his ragged appearance—spite of the unmistakable poverty in which he must have lived and was then living, there was something in his countenance which strongly attracted Silvester Langdale.

In another minute they were in Holborn, and the boy said they had not far to go; they would soon be there, where Miserrimus—he did not use that word, but—where his uncle was ill and dying.

"How long has he been ill?" Silvester Langdale inquired.

"Ever since he came to mother's, sir," answered the boy; "that is three months ago."

"Has he been attended by any medical man?"

"The doctor of the parish has been two or three times, and said my uncle must have nourishing things; but how can we get nourishing things for him, sir?" the boy inquired, piteously. "It is as much as mother can do to send me to school."

"Oh, she sends you to school, does she?" said Silvester Langdale, in a tone that seemed to be one of relief to him; indeed, he felt an undefinable satisfaction in the discovery that the boy did go to school.

"But I've learnt a good deal more from uncle than I have at school," continued the boy. "Oh, sir, doesn't he know a lot!"

"Yes, he is very accomplished," said Silvester Langdale, in an abstracted tone.

"I think there's nothing he doesn't know, sir."

"What has he been teaching you?" Silvester inquired.

"Why, I haven't had time to learn much from him, because three months isn't long, sir, is it? And then when uncle was taken so very ill, he could only talk lessons to me, and not teach me with books. He's told me all about mathematics, and Roman history, and the history of Greece; and when he first came he taught me to fence and to draw, but that was only on a slate, because we couldn't get any pencils and books; for we can't buy anything but something to eat, sir, and not always that."

The boy spoke earnestly and sorrowfully.

"Many a time have I woke up in the

middle of the night, and seen mother a-crying, and I know what it's for."

"Have you a father?" inquired Silvester Langdale.

"Oh yes, but he finds it very hard to get any work since he lost his last fight."

"Lost his last fight!" exclaimed Silvester Langdale, in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes, sir; he used to be a fighter by profession, and then take benefits; but he can get nothing to do now any way. After his last fight he tried a walking match, but because he sprained his ankle, the people said he'd sold them; but I know that he never did, and he would do any work, I am sure, that he could get to do."

By this time they had reached a narrow, miserable alley leading out of Farringdon Street, a thoroughfare which was thick with stifling vapour in the summer-time,—thick and hot, a strange admixture that

made the skin feel clammy, and induced incipient nausea in those who were unacclimatized to the locality,—and the boy stopped at the door of a miserable-looking house, about halfway up this small artery of the great metropolis, and said that was his "home."

Poverty—abject, crushing, demoralizing, hideous poverty—had set its seal even upon the very threshold. The staircase of the wretched house was close to the door,—so close, that you might step from the narrow pavement of the street at once upon it.

"Please to follow me, sir," said the boy; and he led the way up the winding, narrow staircase, which was in utter darkness half a dozen steps up. So dark was it, and Langdale so frequently stumbled, that the boy said, "Will you please to take my hand, sir? I know all the stairs well enough;" and Silvester Langdale did so.

There was a faint glimmer of a thick, heavy light when they came to the first landing, and Langdale felt a kind of relief when he had reached the spot, for the staircase was evidently of such a peculiar construction, that a false step must inevitably precipitate an uninitiated stranger to the very bottom, without a chance of saving himself. It was with anything but gratification, therefore, that he received from his youthful guide the intimation that they had yet another flight of stairs to mount precisely similar to those up which he had with so much difficulty ascended. By the same process, and with the same difficulty, he succeeded in reaching the second landing, and the boy noiselessly opened a room door, and thus presented a scene to the eyes of Silvester Langdale which instantly stamped itself upon his mind, never to be effaced therefrom. There was a dim yellow light

in the room, proceeding from an attenuated candle that was inserted in an old iron candlestick, that might have been reclaimed from a dust-heap, but which, nevertheless, was clean withal. In the light that proceeded therefrom, Silvester Langdale was enabled to see a wretched bed upon the floor, upon which was lying a human form that Langdale instinctively felt, rather than saw with his eyes, was almost as fleshless as a skeleton in a charnel-house. The wretched bedclothes were evidently so thin that the outline of the person who was sleeping in the bed was painfully traceable and terribly suggestive. There was no furniture in the room save an old chair and a large dilapidated trunk, which was made to serve the purpose alternately of a washstand, a table, and a desk. On the chair a woman was seated, watching the sleeper upon the wretched bed. The moment the door

opened, she rose and put her finger to her lips; and when she saw Silvester Langdale, she bowed to him with a natural grace that really almost seemed like a mockery in that dismal room. This was the thought of Silvester Langdale as the woman advanced noiselessly towards him.

"Mr. Langdale, I presume," she said, in a whisper. "He has been talking of you, sir, the whole day, and I fear me that what he has said is really prophetic." And the woman wept bitterly.

"What has he said?" inquired Silvester.

"He says he has but to see you, and to die in the misery that he has inherited; but in peace," she replied. "Oh, my poor lost brother of a miserable sister."

"You are his sister, then?" said Langdale; "I never knew he had any relations until this boy spoke of him to-night as his uncle."

The sleeper moved upon the bed; the

involuntary effort was evidently painful, for he groaned. Langdale went to the side of the bed, and seated himself on the box, and waited in silence for the sleeper to awake, the woman resuming her seat in the chair on the opposite side. He looked round the miserable room, and observed it more attentively than he had been able to do when he first entered. "And has it come to this?" he mused; "a brilliant intellect, so highly cultivated, too, to find a home at last like this. O God! the contemplation seems to scorch my brain!" And he put his hand up to his forehead as he thought this; and musing still amidst that awful wretchedness that was so palpable around him, he remembered those happy days of his youth when the miserable creature who was now lying upon that wretched bed was a thoughtless, gay, and brilliant man—reckless, it is true—careless of his great

mental acquirements, and ambitious only for the applause of pothouse companions, and recking not of what the future might produce. He was the idol of the schoolboys whom he taught in Nicholas Darvill's school. They caught up readily the instruction that he was so well able to impart, and his tuition was no drudgery to them. If he had been endowed with energy and with ambition, an intellect such as his, stored as it was with most precious gifts, might have carried him to a splendid eminence, glorious to himself and beneficial to the world. But his ambition, as we have said, was limited to the miserable sphere of a small pothouse, and he gradually clouded his great intellect in those fumes that leave their blight upon the mind. To him it was facile to gather the treasures of ancient and modern literature, for Greece and Rome and Germany had no arcana amongst their intellectual

treasures that he could not with ease explore. And yet he wasted such great gifts as these upon the narrow intellects of those whose temple was a public-house, and whose enjoyments were material. He was content with the celebrity which such a circle could give, and with the material pleasures which tobacco and malt beverages could yield. With these twin agents would he cloud his brain until he verged upon lunacy, and became indifferent to all around. In consideration of his great intellect and wide acquirements, Nicholas Darvill had tolerated his usher's self-neglect, and something worse, until his patrons, the parents and guardians of his pupils, became loud and menacing in their remonstrances; and so, reluctantly, after repeated efforts to produce a salutary change in his course of life, the old man was at length compelled, with his eyes clouded by tears that welled up from his

generous heart, to send the man who has just so truly signed himself "Miserrimus" out upon that world of which he knew but little and cared for less. From that moment Silvester Langdale had heard nothing of his instructor, save that he had made his way to London, and had there been lost as it were in its overwhelming vortex. It is not surprising, then, that the young man should feel something like anguish as he looks down upon the wretched bed beside which he is sitting; it is no matter for wonder that his heart should beat against his breast convulsively as he sees the wasted form upon the bed turn slowly round towards him, and gaze upon him with eyes that seem to glisten from a dead man's skull. Those eyes have recognised their visitor, for a feeble voice—so feeble that its utterance sounds like the hoarse echo of a sigh —cries—

"Langdale, this is kind."

And Silvester Langdale is made conscious that an attenuated hand is held out towards him. He takes it in his own, and as he does so, a manifest shudder runs through the young man's frame, for it is like a grasp from the fingers of a skeleton.

"Stoop down to me, Langdale."

Silvester did so.

"My sand is almost run out—you would not have known me—say that you would not have known me."

Silvester Langdale could with truth, indeed, have declared that he would not have known his former tutor. How should he, indeed?—that sunken cheek, so hollow that the jaws stood out prominently—the mouth covered with matted hair—the forehead wrinkled with deep furrows that privation had carved out—the whole face, indeed, suggestive rather of that

dread change that comes on after death and in the grave, than of that once beaming face that, when he knew it in his youth, was ever lighted up with the joyousness which is characteristic of the heart that takes no heed of what the morrow may produce. Know him! oh, how should he have known him beneath such a change?

"Langdale," said the dying man, clutching at Silvester's hand, "I shall soon be gone, and I shall have died by slow degrees."

The truth of this declaration was too painfully manifest to the young man as he held that attenuated hand, and he felt that he was unable to make any reply to it, even in the shape of commiseration, which might have sounded something like a mockery, even if he had been equal to the task of offering it. After a short pause, the wretched recumbent on the

bed continued in the same tone as before—

"You recollect, Langdale, how we used to read of the refined cruelty that was practised in the Middle Ages, and how ingenuity was tasked to find out means of slow, but sure and lingering death. I have been suffering that torture. My soul has ebbed away, and I have known no consolation," and then he turned round and gazing full into the face of Langdale, he added, with deep earnestness—"Langdale, for two long months I have been without tobacco."

The declaration had a strange jarring effect upon the mind of the young man. There was an admixture of the ludicrous and the solemn, the grotesque and the awful, in the whispered avowal of the man who, there could be no doubt, was dying then.

"They have sent me from the parish

medical advice; but it is too late: the doctor has ordered me port wine, and Abel has gone out with the order upon the overseer to get it. Port wine!" and a faint smile broke upon the lips of the wretched man. "Port wine for me, when what I have needed has been porter and tobacco!"

Strange infatuation! strong, even in death.

"What can I do for you?" faintly inquired Silvester Langdale.

"Nothing, my good friend—my old pupil." And as he said this, he again seized the hand of Silvester with his own bony fingers. "Nothing, unless you will smoke a pipe with me."

There was a kind of fearful grotesqueness about the invitation which thrilled to the heart of the young man, and he knew not how to answer the appeal that was thus made to him. The least consi-

deration made the realization of the suggestion of the wretched man a sort of horror in the mind of Silvester. The picture that was presented to his mind was something like that of a corpse in revelry. But independently of this hideous consideration the young man felt embarrassed about the invitation that had been offered to him, because even if he were to accede to it it was doubtful in his mind what effect it might have upon the being who was prostrated beside him. After a moment's earnest and rather anxious thought, Silvester Langdale beckoned to the woman on the other side of the bed, and, in a whisper, asked her if the medical man resided in the neighbourhood.

"In the next street only," she answered. Langdale took a card from his case, and hastily writing with a pencil thereon, directed the woman at once to proceed to

the doctor, and give him that card. Taking the boy with her, she instantly proceeded on her errand.

"Bless you! bless you!" sighed the dying man. "I knew I might depend upon you for solace." Evidently mistaking the errand upon which the woman had been despatched.

The woman had scarcely left the miserable apartment when Langdale felt a creeping horror come over him. What if the man should die while his relations should be away? The thought caused him to break into a profuse perspiration, and it was quite a relief to him to hear the voice again of his old associate.

"My sister is a good soul," said Nicholas Darvill's usher, "yet she married a pugilist; but Abel is a decent fellow notwithstanding. We have all been starving; they are starving now, but they have never complained of the

burden that I have been to them. Abel is a good fellow, although he is a prize-fighter and a professional pedestrian. I have been with him to the flash houses, and we have picked up money together there, but the hand of misfortune has been heavy upon us both. But I have taught their boy as once I taught you, and he has been apt as you were. And he too has worked. Stoop down nearer to me," he said, as his voice seemed to become weaker. "He too has worked, and we have both been upon the stage,—ay, the stage!" he repeated, as he observed the expression of surprise that was upon Langdale's countenance. "That boy has been our chief support of late. He is a chorister boy, and has a wonderful voice."

"But yourself—how were you upon the stage?" inquired Silvester Langdale.

"I became a dramatist," and the de-

crepit man would have laughed at the declaration, but his strength would not permit the ebullition.

"A dramatist!" echoed Langdale.

"Ay, a veritable dramatist."

"Not in your own name, then, or I should have recognised it," suggested Silvester.

"No; I was Mortimer Montmorency."

For an instant the old laughing expression which Silvester Langdale remembered so well, lighted up and animated the eyes that had looked so fearful when he first beheld them on that wretched bed. But the expression was less than momentary; it was gone even on the instant that it was perceptible to Langdale.

"Yes, I wrote a play in five acts," feebly continued the almost exhausted man. "The boy was engaged at one of the theatres to take part in a chorus, and

I went with him of an evening, and so became acquainted with the manager. Oh, Langdale!" continued the shadow on the bed, after a pause, during which he had closed his eyes from sheer exhaustion —"oh, Langdale, you can have no idea of the solace that play was to me in my poverty and privation! So abject was my poverty—but why need I dwell on that?—*circumspice!*—that I had to beg the paper upon which my drama was written, beg it of the manager whom I had informed of my scheme and plot. He encouraged me, Langdale. Bright dreams of halcyon days floated before my soul. I felt myself sublimed, and when I had placed my drama in the manager's hands, and he had informed me that he would produce it, I thought that my golden dream was out, that I could enter into the garden of the Hesperides. But from that dream I was rudely, crushingly

aroused; for, listen to me, Langdale—listen to the golden guerdon I received for all my toil, and thought, and fondly-cherished hopes."

The flickering energy with which he spoke was too much for him, and he sank back upon his pillow with a groan which seemed to shake his emaciated frame. Silvester Langdale was almost afraid to draw his breath; and it was a grateful relief to him when he saw the skeleton hand again move towards him. He could see that it was seeking his own, and so he put out his own to meet it, and the bony fingers grasped his hand again. Slowly the large eyes reopened, but they were not so bright as they had been when Silvester Langdale first encountered them in that room.

"How dark it is becoming!" said the dying man, scarcely above a faint whisper.

The same light was in the room that

there had been previously; and so the declaration of Nicholas Darvill's usher appeared strange to Silvester Langdale, but he did not express his surprise in words; and the usher continued—

"They gave me *fifty shillings* for my drama in five acts, and then I felt that my soul was crushed—ay, even though the play by 'Mortimer Montmorency, Esq.,' as they styled me in the bills, drew large houses, and had a lengthened run. We could not live on fame and fifty shillings for three months' labour."

The woman has returned with the doctor, a pompous little man, who would not have attended to the summons which had been sent to him if Silvester Langdale's card had not borne the inscription of "Barrister-at-Law" beneath his name. With the woman, and the doctor, and the boy, came the husband of the woman, the father of the boy. He was a big, burly

fellow, athletic and muscular; but his countenance was not repulsive, as is the case with many of his calling, although it was scarred by the traces of conflicts which he had passed through.

"What can be done for this wretched man?" Silvester Langdale inquired of the doctor in a whisper, and pointing to the breathing skeleton on the bed.

"Nothing," replied the doctor; "he is beyond human aid, and has been for days. It has only been a question of time."

The callous way in which the medical adviser of the paupers of that densely peopled district spoke of the dying man sounded like a horror on Silvester Langdale's ears.

"Are you there, Langdale?"

The voice was distinct, but it was so fearful in Langdale's ears that he started back in terror; but instantly recovering himself, he said—

"Yes, I am here."

"You are not alone. Why has the room been darkened?"

The room had not been darkened.

"A sure sign that dissolution is at hand," whispered the doctor to Silvester Langdale. "All will be over in a few minutes."

"Bring your ear close to my mouth," said the dying man to Silvester.

He did so.

"In the box by the bedside is a manuscript. Ask for it."

Silvester beckoned the woman to him, and told her what her brother had said.

"Yes, sir; it is the sketch of a plot that my poor brother intended to work out," and she opened the box, and gave the papers to Langdale.

What awful sound is that which seems to strike into the very hearts of those who are grouped around that bed of

misery, destitution, death? It is the fearful summons, the indicating knell, the last dread effort that the animated clay can make before the spirit frees itself from its abode on earth. It sounds like what indeed it is, a summons from beyond the world, a summons from the unseen but not unknown, the final call from the everlasting.

No motion now; no sound from those parting lips, that are powerless to close, and which will never close again by the volition that has hitherto governed them.

Yes, the doctor, the pugilist, the woman, the boy, and Silvester Langdale feel that they are in the chamber of death. No earthly trouble can again depress the soul of him who once was the gay, light-hearted companion, full of wit and joyousness; but who is now an emaciated corpse.

CHAPTER III.

A CRY OF MURDER IN THE CITY.

THERE is a motley crowd in the space that is in the front of the old Guildhall in the City. It is mostly a ragged crowd, and there are many ill-favoured and slatternly women, and a good many children amongst it. The children are mostly female children too, and every one, for the most part, may be counted as a couple, or at all events one and a half, for nearly every female child carries an infant in her arms; and there are burly labouring men with pipes in their mouths, and the majority of those labouring men are Irishmen, whose occupation, when they

work, is in the region of the docks, of along the shores of the river. It is a noisy crowd, for the grown-up portions of it are in knots or clusters, who are loud in their vociferations, and demonstrative in their gesticulations. It is a kind of crowd that is frequently seen thronging about the entrances of the metropolitan police courts—a crowd that seems instinctively to gather on the spot where any startling crime has been committed, and the perpetrator thereof has to be brought up in due course of law to answer thereto. It is a crowd that appears to scent the odour of a great crime from afar, and to gather round its centre as the vultures swarm round carrion. And the feeling that prevails in such a crowd is usually one of mere curiosity, tinged, it may be said, with a morbid sympathy for the criminal, if the crime be specially heinous; and if it be secret murder—murder in which

there is fearful mystery, murder surrounded by appalling atrocity—then the crowd is dense indeed, but still composed of the same elements, and drawn from the same sources. It is on the first dawn of the crime, as it were, that this crowd congregates in front of our police offices—even before the rumour has gone forth—as soon it does—to every quarter of the great City's round, and through all the country too. And so that crowd at every stage of the terrible inquiry goes on accumulating, until it has swollen to a human sea that is hideous to look upon—a sea that surges in its fearful tide in front of that frowning fortress of crime which lies over against St. Sepulchre's; a turbid sea that is all murky with crime and immorality, which flourish with peculiar rankness even in the presence of the dread example that swings like a mockery from the gallows-tree.

The crowd is noisy and vociferating in front of the justice chamber of Guildhall; for in the wretched alleys and the loathsome streets that lie about the City's heart the cry has that morning gone forth of murder. Close under the very spot where murders and assassinations of every grade of turpitude and horror have so frequently been expiated, the cry has been the loudest; for almost under the very gallows door—at all events in close proximity to it, so close, that when the gallows is erected, the wretched dwellers near the place can hear the sound of the builder's hammers on the Sunday night—a murder—so the rumour goes—has been that morning committed, and the wretched culprit is in the hands of the police, and is to be brought up before the aldermen—astute and learned on the bench, as that discriminating crowd all know full well they are.

And as the hour approaches for the commencement of the judicial business of the day, the motley crowd of the morning draws to itself new elements from the surrounding streets; for the cry of murder, even though it be whispered, has a fearful influence.

The two aldermen whose turn it is to-day to take their places on the judgment-seat, and with great acumen administer—for they can do so intuitively, or *ex officio*—that law—which, in other men, requires the study of a life, in order duly to expound it—have arrived; and with them, from the neighbouring council chambers, have flocked others of their body; for murder is attractive even to an alderman. The doors are thrown open to the public, and there is a rush from the crowd outside; but only those who are close against the outside door have any chance of gaining admission, for the

justice-room is of very limited dimensions, and the portion appropriated to the curiosity of the general public and witnesses is of about the extent of the corridor of a small house.

The great charge of the day is the first upon the list, and as soon as the august representatives of the majesty of the law have taken their seats, it is called on; and immediately afterwards, as from a trap-door in the centre of the crowd that has been forced into the room, the form of a man is seen to emerge, with two attendant policemen to guard him. He is a big man of six feet high—fully,—broad and muscular in proportion, and is manifestly possessed of more than ordinary physical strength. He has a muscular face, too, and a big, massive forehead, and the general expression of the countenance is that which classic painters and sculptors have handed down to us as the ruling

type of the Roman gladiator. As he stands against the iron bar which forms the dock for prisoners in this incongruous chamber of justice, he looks haggard and wild—an expression that is the more apparent from his shirt being open, and his stalwart neck exposed; and he grasps the iron bar in front of him with both his hands.

The prisoner was charged with killing and slaying one Ephraim Glasher, in whose house he rented a couple of rooms. The chief witness against the accused was the wife of the deceased, and the nature of the charge having been stated by the inspector of police, who had it at hand, this woman was called from a chamber that appeared to be situated in a dark corner of the justice-room; and the moment she came into the presence of the prisoner, she burst into a paroxysm of excitement, and was with difficulty withheld

from making a dash at the man at the bar. She was a woman of great stature, bony and angular, and with a countenance of a most forbidding expression. She was between fifty and sixty years of age, but she evidently possessed the vigour of youth still. Her attire was tawdry, but faded, and she had the general appearance of a flaunting gaiety that had lost its brightness, or from which the glaring colours had been subdued by age; the probability being that the several portions of her attire had separately flourished in a different sphere from that in which they now were utilized. The moment this woman made her appearance in the court, she stretched her brawny arms towards the prisoner, and cried at the top of her voice—

"There stands the villain; there is the murderer of my husband. The villain shall be strung up if there is law in England."

"You must give your evidence, my good woman, in proper form, and in the usual way," said the senior alderman, with a profound shake of the head.

"Yes; I'll give my evidence against the devil, and I should like to tear his heart out!" shouted the woman, and she looked indeed as though she would like to perform that operation upon the accused.

"You must be sworn in due form," said the alderman, with a scared look.

"Oh, I'll be sworn; I'll kiss the book. Where is it?"

The book was handed to her, and she grasped it eagerly, and exclaimed, "So help me, God," and then emphatically kissed the book.

The clerk informed her that she must be sworn in the usual form, and that she had not gone through that form.

"In twenty thousand forms, if you like," shrieked the woman.

"Please to take off your glove," said the magistrates' clerk.

"What for?" demanded the woman, in great excitement.

"Because you must be sworn on the book with your bare hand."

"With both hands, if you like, and bare headed too, if that will bring him to the gallows quicker," shouted the woman, and glaring at the prisoner as he stood in the dock, still grasping the iron bar.

The woman hastily tore off her glove, and, clutching the book again, cried fiercely—

"Now what am I to do?"

The oath was then administered to the witness in the usual form, and with the usual grammatical accuracy, and in answer to leading questions, she deposed that the prisoner at the bar had attacked her husband in a most ferocious manner, and with his herculean strength had struck

him dead upon the spot. In reply to further questions, she deposed that a dispute had arisen between the prisoner and her husband respecting certain arrears of rent that had accrued; and because the decease had demanded simply that which was due to him, the prisoner had fallen upon him, and in his own room had struck him dead.

She was required by the astute clerk to the magistrates to be a little more specific in her statement; and after another ebullition similar to that with which she had favoured the bench on her entrance into the court, she deposed that a relative of the prisoner, a drunken, lazy lie-about, had died suddenly in one of the apartments of the prisoner; and her husband, finding that he had no other means of securing what was due to him, had recourse to the expedient of seizing a trunk which was in the dead man's room,

upon which the prisoner at the bar, who was a well-known pugilist by profession, had taken her husband by the throat, carried him on to the staircase landing, and there, with a death-dealing blow, had struck her husband down the staircase—dead!

The prisoner, according to the usual form, was asked if he had any questions to put to the witness.

"Questions!" cried the woman; "let him look me in the face, if the villain can, and put any questions he likes."

As is very commonly the case in charges similar to this in a police court, when a prisoner is required to put any questions to a witness—that is, cross-examine him or her as the case may be,—the accused man at the bar commenced a rambling statement of his answer to the charge that had been made against him, and he was entering into the whole facts of the

case, when he was abruptly checked by the clerk to the magistrates, who informed him that he would have an opportunity of making any answer he had to offer to the charge presently, but until then he must confine himself to any questions he might wish to put to the witness. The prisoner then turned to the witness, and commenced a recital of the incidents of the scene which had led to the catastrophe, which, in fact, was simply the defence in another form, and he was again checked by the magistrates' clerk, with the intimation that he must confine himself to questions to the witness, and reserve his statement for the close of the inquiry. This intimation only confused the prisoner, who could not understand what cross-questioning the witness meant, unless he was allowed at once to give his own version of the entire matter respecting which he was thus charged.

During the whole of the investigation the prisoner might have been observed casting furtive glances first to one entrance to the court, and then to another, as though he anticipated the advent of somebody who would come to his assistance in the sore strait in which he was placed; but no one appeared to relieve his anxiety.

The magistrate inquired if there were any other witnesses, and a police officer stepped forward, and having been sworn with that distinct exactness and solemnity which characterize the administration of an oath in an English court of justice, he deposed that in going his rounds that morning he was startled by the shrieks of murder that proceeded from a street he mentioned; and on proceeding to the spot, he found a man lying at the foot of the first flight of stairs in the house in question, in a state of insensibility, and he immediately sprang his rattle, which

brought to his assistance two brother constables who fortunately happened to be near the locality referred to. Without attending to the insensible man, they promptly ascended the stairs, and found the prisoner at the bar in violent altercation with the last witness, who had made, as it would seem, a fierce onslaught on the accused; and deeming this sufficient evidence that he had been the aggressor in the affray which had led to the condition of the individual they had stumbled over at the foot of the stairs, they had promptly taken the prisoner into custody, and conveyed him to the station-house, whither he was followed by the last witness, who forthwith charged him with the wilful murder of her husband, upon which they returned to the scene of the affray, and had the body of the deceased conveyed into a room of the house, where it was examined by the divisional surgeon,

who at once pronounced that life was extinct.

The prisoner was again asked if he desired to put any questions to the witness, and he intimated to the court that the whole matter was accidental, and that he had expected a gentleman would be there to tell his lordship all about it, as he was a lawyer, and had been sent to. The bench gathered from this intimation that the prisoner expected legal assistance, and asked him if this were so; but before the prisoner could answer the question, a slight commotion was observed at the magistrates' private entrance to the court, and the next moment a gentleman entered. The instant the prisoner saw him, he cried, "This, your worship, is the gentleman I expected;" and there was an expression of relief upon his countenance as he said so.

The gentleman who had entered the

court was a tall man of about fifty years of age, but his appearance did not truly indicate what his real age was. Indeed, he was a remarkable man in this respect, for, as will probably be seen in the course of this history, he seemed to possess the faculty of making himself appear older or younger according to his will. He could look decrepit and bent; he could walk erect and with a firm and determined tread; he could assume a nervous twitching of the hands, as though afflicted with incipient palsy and paralysis; and he could grasp a man's throat with the iron grip of an athlete. He had been known to do so more than once since the time when he could make himself appear to be in age close upon the Psalmist's limit. His hair was thick and dark, and there was no indication of either baldness or of grey. He had a thick beard and a heavy moustache; but the former was tinged

with grey hairs, that appeared strong and bristly amongst the rest, which was of a deep, rich brown.

Such was Mr. Marl Baskerville, the legal adviser with whom the prisoner at the bar had communicated. His legal practice was as peculiar as it was extensive, although it was almost exclusively confined to the members of the sporting world. In the turf, the ring, the hunting-field, the army, Mr. Marl Baskerville was as well known as the prime minister—perhaps better,—and he was a conspicuous light in that veiled scene which has been designated life in London. He was of the legal profession, but that was not his exclusive, perhaps not his principal calling; he had much to do with money matters, and in his office, which was situated in some obscure locality in the west—obscure, and yet to a large portion of the world of London as well known as

the Haymarket—there were mysterious iron boxes, respecting which there were many legends; for they were known to enshrine strange documents, brief in themselves, but which it were well to keep hidden closely. With the members of the pugilistic ring and its patrons, Mr. Marl Baskerville was an oracle. He it was who prepared "the articles" that are drawn up for every fight,—drawn up with as much particularity and verbal strictness as though they were treaties in diplomacy, or instruments which the law would recognise, act upon, and, if necessary, enforce.

Mr. Marl Baskerville had at once answered to the summons of Abel Barnes, the prisoner at the bar, and he now appeared at the court in his defence.

A few words to the bench explained the position of Marl Baskerville, and that he requested a few minutes' consultation

with the accused, which was at once granted, and the prisoner was conveyed into the obscure room that led out of the dark corner of the court.

The consultation was but brief, and presently the prisoner was placed at the bar again, and the evidence that had already been taken was read over to Mr. Baskerville, who desired to cross-examine the wife of the deceased, and she cried,—

"Cross-examine? Yes; you may cross-examine me till you're blue in the face, but you shan't cross-examine his neck out of the noose;" and she pointed with a frantic gesture to the prisoner at the bar.

Mr. Baskerville asked if the deceased had not threatened the prisoner with a knife, and the woman emphatically denied it. In answer to further questions she said that her husband was the owner of many houses similar to the one in which

the prisoner lived, and that they were all let out in rooms, and she never inquired how many people occupied them so long as the rent was paid every three days at the farthest. If it was not paid, the tenants were ejected by force, without the delay which any legal form would necessitate, and whatever they had was seized. Mr. Baskerville then put a question to the woman which roused her fury to the utmost, and she clutched her fingers at her questioner as though she would like to tear him. The question was a very plain one, and such as might, under ordinary circumstances, be easily answered. It was this,—

"Were you really married to the deceased?"

Instead of directly answering the question, she, as we have said, clutched with her fingers at Mr. Baskerville, and her rage glared through her eyes

and swelled her throat. She broke out into emphatic vituperation of the prisoner and his advocate, nor was her rage at all calmed by the magistrate inquiring what the question had to do with the investigation that was then being made.

Mr. Baskerville, in a tone of voice that was not audible in the court, told the aldermen that he had merely put the question with an ulterior object. The fact was, he should be able to show that the woman was not married to the deceased, and as she therefore could have no claim upon his property, her virulence towards the prisoner might be accounted for.

He then spoke in a louder tone of voice, so that he might be heard over the whole court, and said that as it was probable that the aldermen would not finally determine upon the case at that hearing, but

await the verdict of the coroner's jury, he should content himself by calling one witness only, and that was the prisoner's son; and he requested the usher of the court to bring in the boy, Severn Barnes by name.

The boy, having been produced from the dark room, was placed in the witness-box; his eyes were red, his face was haggard and pale, and the vibration of his heart could almost be seen through the threadbare and slender covering that was upon his breast. In answer to the questions that were put, he deposed that on the previous night his uncle had died—and here the poor boy wept bitterly—that shortly after the death of his uncle, the landlord, who was the deceased Ephraim Glasher, came home in a state of intoxication, and demanded to know if that—using a fearful imprecation in reference to the dead man—had paid his

rent, or paid anything in lieu of it; and on being informed that the man would never pay rent again, for he was dead, he declared, with an oath, that it was a lie; and he came up the stairs, and was attempting to force his way into the room in which the corpse lay, when the accused intercepted him, and declared that he should not enter the chamber. This would seem to have infuriated the man, and to have confirmed him in his belief that the wretched occupant of the room was not dead; and drawing a knife from his pocket, he swore that unless the prisoner permitted him to enter the room and satisfy himself, he would stick him. "You shan't enter to-night," cried the prisoner; upon which the landlord made a rush, with the knife in his hand, at the prisoner, who struck out at the deceased with such force that he was knocked down the stairs, and, falling

heavily to the bottom, was killed upon the spot.

The policeman was recalled and questioned as to whether he had seen any knife; and he replied that when the deceased was carried upstairs, a large clasp-knife was found firmly grasped in his hand.

The crowd outside the court had been informed of the course the inquiry inside was taking, and some of the groups of slatternly women expressed themselves with something like indignation that a case which had promised in the morning to be one of atrocious murder, should be dwarfed into manslaughter at the most. What was the use of stopping to see the prisoner brought out? he could not be hung for manslaughter. All the interest of the case was gone, and so most of the crowd went too; and when Abel Barnes was remanded upon the charge

against him, there were few to notice how pale he looked, and to feel sympathy with that ragged but good-looking boy who clung to him as he was being removed.

CHAPTER IV.

"THERE IS THAT CREATURE AGAIN, PAPA. LET US GO HOME."

THE London season is at its height, and is in its glory; indeed, it has been more brilliant than usual, for there have been many adventitious causes conducing thereto. There have been great attractions in the metropolis, that have drawn visitors from all parts of the civilized world, and London has been the centre of gay excitement that has been administered to from every quarter of the globe. And yet gaiety in the public streets, even when that gaiety is exhibited by congregated myriads, does not seem to harmonize

with London; it is not natural to it, it is manifestly out of place. The people know how to enjoy themselves, of course; they are constantly seeking outdoor pleasures, and finding them after their own fashion, and according to their own tastes; but the English people, nevertheless, do not understand, or, at all events, do not exhibit, the real spirit of *al fresco* enjoyment, that is in the metropolis, or in any of the large towns. But London is noisy enough in its mirth, and it is excitable enough therein occasionally, and it can get up demonstrations, vast and almost overwhelming in themselves, but which are almost invariably attended with something that is very nearly allied to failure, although undoubtedly there are grand exceptions, but still we should be but a sorry nation if our national character were to be indicated by our public demonstrations. They are

always solid and substantial enough, but they are generally bungling, and are only impressive in the dense mass of heterogeneous order by which they are characterized—a kind of order, however, that is anomalously a mass of confusion, from which it is something wonderful that no disaster arises, beyond the crushing to death of some dozen or so of unfortunates who happen to be unluckily thrown down and trampled upon. A general illumination is not a frequent event in London, and one would fancy that, being of rare occurrence, something like versatility of taste would be exhibited in carrying it out when it does take place; but no, the illumination of this year is precisely the same as the one two years ago, and stars and garters, crowns and olive-branches, are the limits of the nation's taste in this respect.

The gayest scene in all London, in the

London season, is without doubt Rotten Row, in Hyde Park; and it seems distinct from London, although it is a characteristic part of it. If it were possible to analyze the elements that compose that scene in the drama of civilization, how strange, and perhaps we might say how startling, would be the result obtained! It is not our purpose to attempt such an analysis, seeing that we have no alembic for the purpose; but the drive in Hyde Park, and the ride in Rotten Row, in the midst of London's season, could supply an almost inexhaustible source of reflection to the meditative philosopher who might choose such a field for his speculations. It is said that the most profound novelist that France has ever produced has manuscripts in his library table that would fill fifty large volumes, and that he intends to write for ten years more, if he be spared, before he publishes any of them;

and the reason that he assigns for this strange literary hoarding is, that he has marked out a certain course for himself in which to develop certain phases of society to a limited extent, and only to a limited extent; because he avers that if he were to fashion out all those materials that a walk along the Boulevards of Paris would supply, he could not do it in a hundred years. What, then, must Rotten Row and the drive in Hyde Park be to the imaginative, and contemplative, and creative mind?

Marl Baskerville is no creative or imaginative philosopher, and yet, as he stands at the entrance to one of the crossings of Rotten Row, waiting for a favourable opportunity to pass over to the other side when an eligible opening shall present itself in the stream of equestrians then surging up and down the avenue, a philosophical reflection does pass through

his mind, and he falls into a kind of reverie as he leans against the railings at the side of the road, from which, however, he is presently roused by a voice exclaiming—

"Hollo, Baskerville, you're the very man I wanted to see."

The voice proceeded from a gentleman on horseback, who had reined in his horse the moment he saw Baskerville. He appeared to be a rather tall and spare man as he was seated in the saddle, and he looked between forty and fifty years of age. By his side, on horseback too, was a young lady, of probably about eighteen or nineteen, attired in a riding-habit, and wearing a cavalier hat, which was adorned with a profusion of crimson feathers. She wore gloves which, gauntlet-like, extended nearly to her elbows; and in her hand she carried a riding-whip—not a toy, however; not the limp, light switch that

young ladies commonly flourish when on horseback, but a large black whip, thick in the handle, and heavily mounted with embossed gold, the top thereof being surmounted by a figure of a racehorse with a jockey on his back. She exhibited a commanding and most attractive figure on horseback. The body of her riding-habit fitted faultlessly, and displayed a beautifully tapering waist, above which swelled out, in rolling voluptuousness, those rounded curves which such an attire is so well calculated to make conspicuous. Her face was exceedingly beautiful, but it exhibited a haughty sternness, which perhaps arrested the attention more forcibly even than its beauty. Her eyes were large and almost fierce in their brilliancy, their colour being undefined, something between blue and grey; but whatever their colour might be designated, there could be no doubt as to their power to

express strong passions, and to flash with every fiery impulse of their owner. Her lips, although they were full and large, had an equal power of expression, when passion called it forth; and her nose was large and prominent, but still in entire harmony with all the other features. Although her countenance in repose was soft and beaming, yet had it an expression of strength which was not masculine, and of linear development which was not power. It was a face in every way calculated to express either passion or feeling; such a face as that with which the Goddess of Tragedy might be represented —with a dash of the voluptuous thrown in to tone down the tragic element a little. Her hair was light, and was gathered in a mass behind her hat, and held in bounds by a silken net. She has reined in her horse as her companion had done on seeing Baskerville, but she does

not recognise that personage, for she seems to be intent upon observing the horses of the fashionable equestrians as they pass her. She looks at them critically, with scrutinizing eyes.

"What's this report that I see in the papers to-day about a murder having been committed in the City by one Abel Barnes, a pugilist?" the gentleman on horseback inquires of Marl Baskerville; "surely it isn't our old friend the Bilston?" —Bilston was the *sobriquet* by which Abel Barnes was designated by his fraternity.

"It is our old friend the Bilston though," replied Marl Baskerville; "but it is no case of murder."

"What was it?—a mill?" the gentleman inquired.

"No," said Baskerville; "a scrimmage, in which, as usual, Barnes was unlucky."

"D—— me! it is extraordinary the

ill luck of that fellow; you know I stuck to him till the last; but Lord! I couldn't stand it. And yet I believe the Bilston has got the right stuff in him; still I was obliged to turn him up. I've made stakes for him, I've backed him, and I've got good matches up for him; but what's been the good? he's never been able to do anything but get licked. I thought, however, he'd left the country. And what is this case?—what will it come to?"

"Well, I suppose they'll find it manslaughter at the inquest to-morrow, although I don't believe it amounts to that. He sent for me this morning, and I couldn't very well abandon the poor devil, so I appeared at the police-court for him."

"What has he been doing lately?" inquired the gentleman who was on horseback.

"I rather think it has been going very hard with him of late; in fact, I am sure it has," said Baskerville. "When luck's against a man, he hasn't much chance."

"That's true," responded the gentleman, with something very like a sigh. "Let us get him off if we can. Come to me to-morrow morning about it. I suppose you are going over yonder?" and he pointed in the direction of the centre of the park, and smiled as he did so.

Baskerville said he was going thither, as he must look after his clients occasionally; and as he said this he smiled expressively—a smile that the gentleman he was conversing with seemed very well to understand.

To the uninitiated world it is not known that under the trees in Hyde Park there is a kind of betting exchange held, in which a very motley class of persons assemble daily and speculate

upon the current turf events, and in which large sums of money exchange hands and float about. The turf in England now is not so much a sport as it is a business: it is almost entirely commercial in its character, and the commerce that it has created is conducted upon mathematical principles, which seem, indeed, to be intuitive in those who are proficient in them—for many of these men can scarcely write. Indeed, there are some speculators amongst them who really cannot write, and who employ amanuenses to record transactions which are remarkable for their accuracy and truth of calculation.

It was to this spot in the Park that Baskerville said he was going; a spot which, considering its associations and the people who assemble there, may be truly characterized as one of the mysteries of London.

"You will come to me in the morning then, will you, Baskerville?"

"I will, my lord," said Baskerville, and then he went across the Row upon his way to the spot on which he said his "clients" were assembled; but as Lord Montalban cantered away, the man with whom he had been conversing paused to look after him, and as he did so, the expression of his countenance was entirely changed from that which it exhibited but a few minutes previously. It looked malignant now. Suppressed passion seemed to burst through the eyes that glared beneath those shaggy eyebrows, and Marl Baskerville clenched his hand with an iron grasp upon his thick walkingstick. His lips were firmly compressed together; indeed, he seemed to contract his whole frame, to bind himself around, as it were, with the terrible passion by which he was agitated.

He turned from the spot, and took his way across the enclosure of the Park; and as he did so he muttered to himself—"I never forget, and I never forgive." The muttered exclamation seemed to give him comfort, for he repeated it thrice, and every time with more animation. "The scheme is tedious, because his rank is high; but although it is so hideously slow, yet will it be terribly sure in the end. Yes, it has been working gradually year by year; and such retribution as that which I must work but gains strength with time. Twenty years ago! —when I look back upon the events which that time has produced, it seems an age; but when I look on him, oh God! the interval seems but a night, and yesterday the date of my great wrong. Wrong? Yes, wrong!" He seemed to thrust the word into his heart. "And what has it made me? Well, no matter

what; perhaps that has yet to be seen. I never forget, and I never forgive. No, I never forget, even in the vortex of those exciting scenes to which I minister so much. Oh Heaven! how bright and promising was my youth! how glorious the scene of life appeared to me when first it opened to my view! but what a terrible reality has it developed! But I never forget, and I never forgive!" and then he walked hurriedly on, as though by that means he relieved his agitation. "No wonder people fear me as they fawn upon me. They cannot fathom me. No, no; and least of all you, Lord Viscount Montalban!" and he said this with a tone of scorn that was manifestly a relief to him.

By this time he had reached that *Rialto* of the turf upon the turf itself, to which we have alluded. Viscount Montalban was a nobleman with but one

daughter; he had no other family. His wife had died several years before the period at which we meet with him, and he had not married again, and had probably never entertained any desire to do so. He was, however, connected with many noble families by kindred, and amongst them was a cousin who was a Duke. Viscount Montalban succeeded to a princely fortune, after a long minority, but year by year that fortune had sensibly diminished, and now year by year he was becoming less wealthy. The vast amount of available money which he had inherited on coming of age had been a misfortune to him, and he had been frequently heard to declare that, although he had been born rich, he certainly had not been born lucky. From his earliest youth a passion for the turf had inspired him, but his ill fortune in connection with it had become proverbial in the sporting world. He had

plunged with a wild recklessness into the vortex of turf pursuits, and he commenced his career by purchasing, at inordinate prices, a stud of great extent: and he would seem to have had a mania for favourites for great races, especially for Derby favourites; and he would purchase them at prices that were actual fortunes in themselves. For one equine quadruped he would pay a sum that would have mounted "the six hundred" that galloped into the yawning jaws of death in the valley of Balaklava; and at the back of that he would heap up sums of gold in the shape of bets that were almost fabulous, and all which might at any moment be irretrievably lost by any one of the ills which equine flesh is heir to, or by the negligence of a stable-keeper. As the Viscount grew older, however, he became more prudent; and when all the accumulated revenues of his minority had van-

ished, he came to the resolution of disposing of all his stud, and contenting himself with being a spectator of and a speculator upon the studs of others. The trustees of his youth had, as though with some misgiving with regard to the course of the young lord when he came of age, invested, under certain powers which had been given them, a portion of the accumulations in the purchase of an estate in one of the midland counties; but as though, even in this matter of prudence on his behalf, the ill-luck which had been born with him should be conspicuous, it was discovered, when he came of age, that the title to the estate so purchased had a stain upon it. In reality, however, this was fortunate for him, strange as the fact may appear; for while it was not sufficient, as it would seem, to jeopardize his enjoyment of the property, it precluded him from raising money upon it. That

one estate was the sole unencumbered property that he now possessed.

Property, as we know, the axiom tells us, has its duties as well as its rights: it has its bitters as well as its sweets, too; and property sometimes has more of the bitters than the sweets, though perhaps not often.

Lord Montalban and his daughter are mounted upon two splendid thoroughbreds, and as they are put into a canter on Baskerville taking his way across the park, the sweeping action of the steeds and the graceful riding of the young lady attract attention from the brilliant throng in Rotten Row.

And Viscount Montalban was justly proud of his daughter's horsemanship. She had been accustomed to riding on horseback from the time she was a little child, and in Lord Montalban's county she was known now as the most fearless

and dashing rider across country that county had ever produced. She had made hunting fashionable amongst the ladies of her neighbourhood, but none of them could approach her in her equestrian accomplishment; they all lacked her fearless dash and energy. All save one. During the previous season one fair rival had appeared to contest with her for the triumphs of the hunting-field, armed with every requisite to make the trial. The gentlemen of the hunt were delighted with the advent of the stranger, who was dashing, handsome, impetuous, and—— well, utterly unrestrained in her conversation. The all-important question, "Who is she?" was speedily answered, and the majority of the members of the hunt smiled; but Lord Montalban looked grave, as did some few others.

The rival in the hunting-field to Lord Montalban's daughter was known in

Rotten Row too, for she resided in London, and had no seat in the country, save that upon her horse, of which she was undoubtedly the accomplished mistress.

Lord Montalban and his fair companion are cantering towards Kensington Gardens, when a brilliant horsewoman, attired exactly like the daughter of Lord Montalban—so exactly like, indeed, that one might have been taken for the other,—dashes by them upon a thoroughbred steed; and as she does so she turns with something like a disdainful movement of her head, and with a supercilious curl upon her pouting lip, and casts a look of recognition at the peer and his daughter, which brings the blood into the young lady's face, as she exclaims to her father,—

"There is that creature again. Let us go home, papa."

They turned round immediately, and cantered towards Park Lane; but before

they had reached the extremity of the Park, the fair equestrian who had been designated "the creature" dashed past them again, and gave them the same kind of recognition as before.

When Miss Montalban reached home she was very much flushed and excited.

CHAPTER V.

VISCOUNT MONTALBAN AND HIS DAUGHTER AT HOME.

VISCOUNT MONTALBAN lived in Park Lane, in a row of houses that were not particularly attractive outside, but which were, nevertheless, very commodious, very comfortable, and very compact within. The best part of the house looked into the Park, and yet it did not appear to be the front of the house. Indeed, it seemed to have no front at all, for the principal entrance was situated in a back street; and this arrangement probably made the interior of the house the more charming, by the agency of contrast. Entering the house from the back street, and going

into the chief reception-room, was like stepping from the pent-up town at once into the free and glorious country; for there were green creeping plants in trellis-work outside the house on the side that faced the Park, and out beyond were the spreading elms, and smooth, green turf, the flower-beds and fountains of that bright oasis which is the glory of western London. From the windows of the house the intervening road was not visible, for there was between it and the thronged thoroughfare a kind of terrace, beneath which were mysterious chambers, that might be dungeons, or sculleries, or vaults, or anything else that a lively or a morose fancy might picture on the mind's tablet; and these mysterious chambers abutted on the road, and shut it out from the windows that opened on to the terrace that was formed by the flat roof which covered them, so that from the interior,

the Park looked like pleasure-grounds attached to the house itself.

It is in one of these rooms that Lord Montalban and his daughter are seated at the open windows; each employed in watching the moving figures that are out upon the Park, and are crossing it in all directions. The scene is constant and never-varying in that particular spot; save when a regiment of soldiers is brought out there to drill, and then a temporary change is produced. The carriage drive between the trees and the Park makes the scene animated and interesting, for it is ever varying, although it is the same for ever in all its leading features. Lord Montalban is lounging in the window at one end of the room, and his daughter is seated at the window at the other end: there are four windows in the room, leading on to the terrace that abuts upon the public way. The two are

gazing listlessly upon the scene the Park presents; they are musing upon very widely different subjects, however. Perhaps, if Lord Montalban had been asked on the moment to declare what he was thinking about, he would have found it difficult to answer, or if he did at once answer, might do so inaccurately. His thoughts were roving and changing and revolving as it were around a centre, which would be found but ill defined in his own brain, if he were to concentrate his mind upon its elucidation. He was thinking of Abel Barnes and Marl Baskerville—at least, they were the staple of his thoughts; and the idea had suggested itself to his mind, that if he were to witness the trial of the pugilist it would produce a new sensation, which it would be worth while to seek, and so he had resolved that he would be present on the interesting occasion.

Miss Montalban's thoughts were not so wandering as were those of her father, and were far more concentrated. They were stronger, too, in their effects, as evinced by the varying expression of the features which an observer might have detected. As she gazed lazily out upon the Park and its moving scenes, she was mentally amusing herself—or deluding herself, perhaps, would be the more accurate expression—in drawing two portraits, and they were so like each other that, as they came vividly upon her mind, fresh from the pencil of her fancy, she would contract her brow, and bite her lips, and frown. If it had been possible to photograph her thoughts, or the pictures that her thoughts produced, the result would have been a pleasing scene, albeit the effect upon Miss Montalban, as we have observed, was that of a clouded brow, and a general expression on her

face which sometimes amounted very nearly to agitation.

The scene that was in reality before her in the Park seemed to partake in her eyes of the character of a mental dissolving view, for her thoughts carried her away to a spot by the cover side, and miles away from any town; and she would curl her lip in scorn, as at that cover side she, with her mind's eye, observed an arrival in that glittering gathering—the arrival of one who was so like herself, in figure, in face, and in attire, as to look like her second self. In her fancy she hears a ringing laugh, that with its joyousness has a sound of mockery, which is, or seems to be, addressed entirely to the imaginative listener, and it is then especially that her eye dilates, and her lip curls, and there is a slight heaving of the bosom, which ordinary respiration does not necessitate

or produce. For a moment she blurs the picture out, by flinging, with more than necessary energy, her long curls over her shoulders, and by changing her position as she sits; but still, as her eyes again sweep the scene that is really before her in the Park, her thoughts revert to her mental photograph, and the cover side is vividly before her again, and the laugh rings out again from that form that looks like her other self; and that imaginary laugh is the more galling now, as the mental photograph shows other figures—figures attired in the scarlet uniform that the fashion of the chase demands, and all grouped round her other self, and evidently charmed by it.

Fancy is indeed inexplicable, and in the case of Miss Montalban particularly so. What is the feeling that curls that lip, and fires that eye, and knits that brow, and throws a shade upon all that

countenance? Is it jealousy? Is it pride? Is it offended vanity? It may be all those feelings commingled, and tinged with scorn, which almost invariably accompanies them in that strange anomaly, the human heart.

Miss Montalban rubs her eyes, but she cannot brush away that picture that her thought has uncontrollably produced, and through the real scene that is before her in the Park she still gazes upon it.

But both her own reverie and that of Lord Montalban were broken and dispersed by an announcement which heralded the appearance, in a few moments, of a gentleman who was proclaimed as the Marquis of Milltown. He was a young man only just of age, but he was a conspicuous member of the high life of London. He was acknowledged to be the most faultless dresser in the whole world of fashion; and yet he did not lead

the fashions, he only followed them—conspicuously, it is true; but he illustrated, he did not create. He had never attempted anything like a strain upon his intellect, which from his youth upwards had always been delicate, not to say ailing, and which, therefore, had always been treated tenderly; and so anything like mental exertion had been studiously guarded against. The study, however, of his personal appearance had appeared to be very congenial to his mental organization. It was a matter to the development of which it had been discovered he could devote his undivided soul, without any great strain or tax upon his genius. He was an animated illustration of the fashion which came by the last post from Paris, and he was as well known in the haunts of fashion as that mighty figure which obligingly points the way that we should go down Constitution Hill.

It is ever thus. While the brilliant gadfly, flitting athwart the gay parterre, is being observed by admiring eyes, the eagle that is soaring into the skies is unperceived.

The Marquis of Milltown was the eldest son of the duke who was the noble kinsman of Viscount Montalban, and his portrait was conspicuous in photographers' glass cases, like the brightest page in the book of fashions. He believed that in his appearance he was possessed of irresistible power over the female heart, and this feeling had led him into utter indifference upon the subject. He was self-glorified in the belief that he possessed the fascinating power; he had only to use it when it was wanted to minister to his desires. It is true that his intimacy with Miss Montalban had somewhat shaken this delightful belief, and he had once or twice been very near to the con-

clusion in his own mind that she was a peculiar girl; and if that impression had become a conviction in his mind, perhaps he would not have been in error.

Miss Montalban *was* a peculiar girl. She had strong passions, which were easily roused. She had never known restraint; she had never entertained a desire that she had not gratified; and it is not surprising, therefore, that amongst other failings she should be a little self-willed. She had from a child evinced a strong predilection for horses, and she had taken quite as much interest in her father's career on the turf as he had himself; and when the stud was broken up, she shut herself in her room, and cried with vexation. It was the first trouble she had ever experienced, and she felt it sharply. She, however, speedily found relief, for she could indulge her predilection by watching the records of turf

transactions, which she did studiously, and she speedily became an adept in the calculation of odds; indeed, she became attached to the study of mathematics, and she took especial delight in instructing her father how to make his book mathematically. If, therefore, the Marquis of Milltown had succeeded finally in arriving at the conclusion that Miss Montalban was a peculiar girl, his conclusion could have been scarcely considered an erroneous one.

The young marquis entered the room in which Lord Montalban and his daughter were seated, and he moved across it like an elegant portrait that had stepped out of its frame, or, to use the more homely simile, he looked as though he had walked out of a bandbox that had just been sent home from the man-milliner's. The patent leather of his boots was brilliancy burnished; his trousers might

have been those of a statue, they looked so like carved work; his waistcoat was quite plain, but no hand but that of an artist could have produced it; and his surtout seemed to be a part of his figure, which was symmetrical, and all that could possibly be desired for outward show. His beard and moustache, both profuse, had evidently been cultivated and nourished with peculiar care and skill; and both were rich, and flowing, and soft, for they had never been rendered bristly by the agency of the barbarous razor. His hair was thick and wavy, and every young lady who knew him intimately, or by sight only, acknowledged that he was handsome. And so he was; there could be no doubt of it.

The marquis, advancing to Lord Montalban, said, "Well, how d'ye do?" not in a lackadaisical tone, not in a mincing, certainly not in a hearty tone, but in a mild,

beaming way, in which there was no energy, or anything like it, but which combined the free and easy with the inane. And then, turning to Miss Montalban, he simpered, "How d'ye do?" as he held out his gloved fingers to shake hands. And his was a very peculiar shake of the hand. He managed to throw into his fawn-coloured kid glove a kind of fervour, which was a combination of the lover's gentle squeeze, the friend's sympathetic pressure of the palm, and the rapid action of the postman's double knock.

Miss Montalban had risen when the Marquis of Milltown entered, and she received him with a smile which seemed to melt into an undefined frown, that rather appeared to throw a shade over her face than to be a part of it. The young Marquis had never professed any love for her, and yet she knew—she instinctively

felt that the young man had some sentiment of the kind, a feeling unknown directly to himself, but which, if she had chosen, she might have fashioned to any purpose she pleased. She had very little art about her at present, however. She had strength of purpose and of will, and she had never been thwarted in anything. She would not have understood it, therefore, if anybody had made a suggestion to her on the subject of the worldly advantage of winning a marquis. The Marquis of Milltown was in her eyes an empty nothing, a dressed-up doll, a marionette, anything without a soul; although he had one solitary redeeming quality in her eyes—he could ride well; but then, again, this solitary redeeming point was almost lost in the anxiety which he invariably displayed in the field to avoid all obstacles of danger, especially when the ground was muddy, lest an

accident might spoil the appearance of his coat.

"I say, Montalban," he said, "I've just come across the Park, and they tell me they've made 'Peeping Tom,' first favourite for the Goodwood."

"What, Drakengull's horse?" exclaimed Miss Montalban, with much animation.

"Ya-a-s, Drakengull's, who has been so devilish unlucky with all his nags."

"You mean the horse that ran at Epsom last year, and was knocked over the chains?" exclaimed Miss Montalban, eagerly.

"That's the one. They changed his name. You know he was called the 'Fop' then. Devilish bad name for a horse, I think;" and the Marquis of Milltown appeared rather languid after the effort involved in giving a definite opinion of that strength.

"Papa, you recollect that I said at the

time, that was the best made horse I had ever seen in my life. If your stud had not been broken up"—and she said this with something like a sigh,—"we would have added him to it."

"What! did you fancy him so much?" said the Marquis of Milltown, with a pleased smile.

"It's my belief that he would have won then but for that accident; and as he has been so long laid up in lavender, I don't wonder that they make him first favourite for the Goodwood cup. Papa, we shall go, of course?"

"Of course, my dear. I've engaged myself to Templebloke, whose seat is in the neighbourhood."

"Oh, then we shall meet on the lawn," said the Marquis, in a tone of mild enthusiasm.

A footman here handed a card to Lord Montalban, who, glancing at it, said,

"Show him up;" and as the lackey left the room, her father turned to Miss Montalban, and said, "Here's Baskerville, my dear, our commissioner."

At the same moment Mr. Baskerville was ushered into the room; but he seemed to have become an entirely changed man since the previous day. He walked totteringly, and his hands appeared to tremble as with incipient palsy; but a close observer might have discovered that his eye was as keen, his glance as penetrating, and his nerves as firm as when he met Abel Barnes in the justice-room at Guildhall. He bowed profoundly to Miss Montalban, who said,—

"A touch of your old complaint, Mr. Baskerville?"

"An old complaint indeed, Miss Montalban, and one that will remain with me to the end;" and he turned and smiled at Lord Montalban.

"Well, Baskerville, have you done anything in the matter of this poor devil?" inquired Lord Montalban, referring of course to Abel Barnes.

"The inquest was held last night, and a verdict of wilful murder returned—upon what grounds I am at a loss to understand, and so of course he must be tried. I have seen him this morning, and he has taken a strange fancy into his head,—these ignorant people often do take these strange fancies;—he has a strong desire to be defended by a young man who was present when the brother-in-law died, and who, it seems, has just been called in Gray's Inn. I tried to persuade him that it was a dangerous thing to entrust such a case to a young and inexperienced man, but he said he had a strange confidence in him, which he hoped I'd humour."

"Well, as far as that goes, I think one is as good as another, if the young

man has a good case," said Lord Montalban.

"It's the good case that generally destroys a young man," said Marl Baskerville.

"How do you mean?" Lord Montalban exclaimed, in surprise.

"It may sound strange to say so, but the sympathies of the court are generally on the side of the bad case. Law is often tortured in favour of the miscreant; it is never relaxed in the case of the innocent."

"Oh, that's cynical!" cried Lord Montalban.—"What do you say to that, Milltown?"

"Well, I don't know," said the young marquis; "I suppose it's as Mr. Baskerville says, although, to tell you the truth, I never troubled myself about the question."

"Then you intend to retain the young

man?" Lord Montalban said to Mr. Baskerville.

"Well, as your lordship says, perhaps we may as well; one may be as good as another. But I am going to see the gentleman this evening, and then I shall decide."

"Very good; and you must let me know when the trial comes on, as I intend to be present."

"Your lordship intends to be present?" cried Marl Baskerville, in a tone of great surprise, and for the moment forgetting his decrepitude.

"Yes. I'll see what perhaps may be the end of him," said Lord Montalban.

"I'll be sure to let your lordship know," said Baskerville. "Has your lordship anything to communicate this morning?"

"I have," broke in Miss Montalban. "You must go and execute a commission for me."

"Augusta, my dear!" exclaimed Lord Montalban.

"Yes, papa. I am determined to try my chance myself upon 'Peeping Tom,' for Goodwood. I feel a strong presentiment that he will win, and we will be there to see him."

"She must have her way, I suppose, Baskerville," said Lord Montalban, smiling; "and of course if she goes that way, I must go too."

"And I certainly will follow Miss Montalban," said the Marquis of Milltown. "What better lead could I have?" and he looked at Augusta Montalban with an inane smile, expecting that she would be delighted with the declaration; but she exhibited no such feeling, and so the mind of the young lord received the impression that Miss Montalban was a very grand creature, and that she would indeed be a splendid wife for him to

choose. He felt quite struck with this idea, and therefore he did not attempt to follow up the conversation.

"And what shall the commission be?" inquired Baskerville.

"Suppose we split five hundred between us, eh, Milltown?" suggested Lord Montalban.

"I'm perfectly agreeable," replied the marquis. But the idea occurring to his mind that in that expression he was complimenting himself, he said, "I mean, I'll go the five hundred with you."

"And what is my proportion to be?" asked Miss Montalban; but not waiting for any answer, she added, "But I wont have any proportion. There must be a separate transaction for myself. So, Baskerville, you will invest a hundred pounds for me."

Marl Baskerville looked inquiringly at

Lord Montalban, who shrugged his shoulders, and said—

"Oh, you must do it, I suppose."

"I will at once have the money put on," cried Baskerville, taking up his hat; "and this evening you shall hear from me respecting it, my Lord."

"I'll go with you if you like, Baskerville. My cab's at the door," said the Marquis of Milltown, who felt that he could not much longer bear the interview, which had opened up a new sensation and impression in his mind.

"You look quite shaky," he said to Baskerville; "I'll drive you over."

"Your lordship is exceedingly obliging."

"Oh, there's one thing I should say, you know," observed the young lord, at once destroying the apparent kindness of his offer; "I want to speak to you myself—I do indeed—something very particular." And he twirled his cane

round with his finger, as a relief to his mind.

"Good morning, Montalban. I hope I shall see Miss Augusta in the Row this afternoon. I haven't seen her on her new purchase."

This for a moment seemed to brighten Miss Montalban towards the young marquis, and she exclaimed hastily—

"Well, I'll be there, on purpose that you may see him."

The marquis felt quite agitated; that splendid creature before him, who was so proud and unbending only two minutes before, had at length found out what all the world besides had known so well—that his appearance was irresistible.

Hasten him away, Marl Baskerville, or he will be rooted speechless to the spot for at least twenty minutes longer, and it is quite clear that Miss Montalban would not like that. Baskerville had no such

impelling motive, but he did take the marquis away, and in a few minutes afterwards this glass of fashion and mould of form was driving his magnificent stepper across the Park, with Baskerville seated in the cab beside him.

CHAPTER VI.

SILVESTER LANGDALE'S FIRST BRIEF.

SILVESTER LANGDALE has been reading the report of the inquest upon the man who was killed in the house in which Nicholas Darvill's usher had died, and he is flushed with something like indignation at the verdict which has been returned by the coroner's jury.

"Wilful murder!" he cries to himself; "why, how could the dolts have arrived at such a conclusion upon such evidence? Surely it will require but small skill or argument on the trial to relieve the man of such a charge."

And then he rises, and paces the room hurriedly. "That wretched chamber and its emaciated tenant seem to haunt me," he soliloquizes; "and to think that such a tragedy as this should have followed poor Margale's death! That stalwart pugilist, too; I am sure he is to be pitied. There was nothing vicious in his countenance, as it appeared to me in the dim light of that fearful room; and he acted upon the instincts of a man in repelling the heartlessness of the wretch whose death he has caused. And that poor boy, so intelligent, so poorly clad, and yet evidently so carefully tended; and then poor Margale's sister. The whole scene appears to be the vivid remembrance of some distempered dream; but, alas! it is no dream, for it is an awful reality. What can I do for them? Nothing. If I visited them, I could merely offer them—words. Nothing more. And of what

value would words be to people in such a situation as theirs?"

There is often great value in mere words. "A soft answer turneth away wrath;" and words have sometimes a more potent influence upon the human mind than more substantial gifts. Words spoken kindly are a heavenly solace to the broken spirit; words of sympathy and goodness have the power often of lifting from the heart the pall that overwhelming trouble has thrown over it; and words are alone the balm that human aid can give when the spirit from its earthly penthouse is about to seek the awful mystery of the "undiscovered bourne."

Yes: and when Silvester Langdale, in his implied regret, soliloquized that if he visited the family of Abel Barnes he could only offer them words, he was unconsciously enunciating that which might

be the greatest boon that he could offer—a boon to them—a boon to him—a boon, indeed, that should materially affect the future lives of all of them.

"Trial by jury," he soliloquized still, "is one of the grandest of our grand old institutions: but it becomes blurred and stained by verdicts such as these."

And then he paused, and pondered on the subject of his thoughts.

"I'll write an indignant protest to the editor," he exclaimed, as he took the newspaper up again. And then he hesitated. "No," at length he said, "the press is sure to take up a case like this. They cannot pass it over."

Silvester Langdale has just arrived at this conclusion when there is a knock at his door. It is sharp, sudden, and clear; and, in the agitation that he feels, for the moment it startles him. There could be no mistake. The knock was at his own

door, and with a strange kind of hesitation he opened the door to see who had knocked thereat. He who had knocked was a tall man, with a bushy beard and moustache; and as Silvester Langdale opened the door the person stepped into the chamber, and said he presumed he had the honour of addressing Mr. Langdale.

Silvester bowed, and requested his unknown visitor to be seated.

The visitor took the chair that was placed for him, and said—

"We are unacquainted with each other, Mr. Langdale, but it is possible that we may hereafter be thrown much together. You have only just been called, I think, Mr. Langdale?"

"Only in the last term," replied Silvester, bowing.

"Yes, in the last term, I know. Then of course your practice has not been extensive as yet?" said his visitor, smiling.

Silvester Langdale said he had not even appeared in court yet; and he smiled too.

"Your present position is very different from mine," said the stranger, "for I have had a very extensive practice."

"Are you at the bar, then?" eagerly asked Silvester Langdale.

"No, I am not, but my profession is the law."

Silvester Langdale bowed, and said, "Oh, indeed."

"My name is Marl Baskerville."

Again Silvester Langdale bowed, with an expression on his countenance that plainly indicated that he was not acquainted with his visitor.

"You do not know me," said Mr. Baskerville. "You have not been much in London, I presume?"

"No, indeed, I have not," said Langdale, with a smile which may be said to

have been apologetic of his want of experience of London.

"No, or I have no doubt you would have recognised the name of Marl Baskerville," said that gentleman. "I have been connected with the law for more than thirty years, Mr. Langdale; and I have seen young men like you rise into eminence, and assisted them thereto; I have seen men attain that eminence, and I have seen them topple down headlong from it, never to reach it again."

As Mr. Baskerville did not add that he had also assisted at this latter performance, the matter must therefore be supposed to be in doubt.

"But my practice has not been wholly in the law, although it has all tended thereto. I am come," Mr. Baskerville added, rather abruptly, "to place your foot, Mr. Langdale, on the first round of the ladder of your profession."

Silvester Langdale bowed quite profoundly this time, and his heart fluttered, for he was in the presence of that sacred personage, the first client. It is almost unnecessary to add that he felt slightly nervous.

"You are acquainted with a person of the name of Barnes?" said Mr. Baskerville.

"Barnes! Barnes!" repeated Silvester Langdale, and thinking for a moment. "No, I am not acquainted with any one of that name."

"Strange!" said Mr. Baskerville. "I cannot have made any mistake."

Silvester Langdale fervently hoped not, but he did not say anything.

"Abel Barnes, the pugilist, I mean," said Mr. Baskerville.

"Oh," exclaimed Silvester Langdale, recollecting who the person referred to was, "the unfortunate man who has been committed for murder."

"The same," said Mr. Baskerville.

"I did not recollect his name. In fact, I did not know it," said Silvester Langdale, "although I have but just read the report."

"You do not know him, then?"

"I had never heard of him until the night before last, when I was summoned to a scene in the wretched dwelling in which he resided, which I shall never forget—never."

"Yes, I have heard it all from Barnes himself," said Mr. Baskerville. "It must have been a terrible scene."

"It was a scene that appears to have burnt itself into my memory. Poor Margale."

"He was with you at school, I understand?" said Mr. Baskerville.

"He was an usher, a fellow-usher with me in the country."

"Well, he is gone," said Mr. Basker-

ville, "and it is of the living that I have to speak now. You seem to have made a wonderful impression upon Abel Barnes the pugilist."

"That is strange. I do not think that I exchanged a word with him," said Langdale, in a tone of surprise.

"These men are sometimes very impressionable," Mr. Baskerville observed. "I have seen a great deal of them; I have been thrown much amongst them. In fact, Mr. Langdale, I am the chief adviser of the fraternity."

And Mr. Baskerville smiled as he said this. Silvester Langdale smiled too, of course, but he did not know whether he ought to feel gratified at the communication which Mr. Baskerville had made to him with regard to his connections.

"I suppose," continued Mr. Baskerville, "that his brother-in-law must have talked to Barnes about you, Mr. Langdale, and

so he had become prepossessed in your favour before he saw you."

"May I be allowed to ask to what this tends?" Silvester Langdale modestly inquired.

"I should have thought you might have guessed, Mr. Langdale," said Baskerville; —and yet I don't know," he added, rather to himself than to Langdale. "No, I don't know how you should.—Well then, Mr. Langdale," he continued, rather rapidly, "you have observed that Barnes has been committed for wilful murder."

"A preposterous charge!" Silvester Langdale observed, with something like a flush of indignation.

"Very likely," Mr. Baskerville said, very calmly, "but the verdict has been returned, the indictment will be preferred, and Abel Barnes will be arraigned. He must, therefore, be defended."

Is Silvester Langdale agitated? He is.

Anybody, with far less penetration than Mr. Baskerville possessed, would observe it. He breathes quickly, and his eyes glisten, and there is a visible, or almost audible, palpitation of the heart.

"I think you have a faint glimmering of the object of my visit, Mr. Langdale," observes Mr. Baskerville, with a peculiar smile.

"I think I have," Silvester Langdale says, but in a tone that is quite faint.

"Abel Barnes has expressed a strong desire that you, Mr. Langdale, should defend him," says Mr. Baskerville, with something like precipitation.

Silvester Langdale clutches the back of the chair that is near to where he is standing. The golden dream that has for three years been a glory to his life is opening in reality before him. It is not strange that he should be agitated.

"Do you think you will be equal to the task?" Mr. Baskerville inquires.

The question seems to rouse Silvester Langdale into energy, for he exclaims—

"I have been reading that report of the inquest, Mr. Baskerville, and if good fortune had placed my opening case in my new profession in my own choice, it is the one I would have chosen; for it is one in which the greatest of our institutions has been tarnished. It is a libel upon it that I could have desired to repel. Wilful murder!—the verdict is a mockery."

"Your theme is a good one," remarked Mr. Baskerville, with the same coolness as before; "but you must not be too impulsive, or rather, perhaps, I should say, you must not be too confident. You cannot, probably, be too impulsive at the bar. Impulse goes a great way with juries, and so, indeed, does confidence, of a sort;" and Mr. Baskerville smiled significantly. "Recollect," he continued, "that you still have a jury to deal with."

"But I cannot believe that another such a jury can be found in the same month."

"Oh, entertain no such hope as that, Mr. Langdale. Why, in the interest of Abel Barnes himself I should not mind submitting his case in trial to the very same jury who have returned the preposterous verdict, as you have very properly designated it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Silvester Langdale.

"You forget that this was a coroner's jury; there was no defence, no cross-examination, nay, even the accused himself was not present."

"True, true; that did not strike me," said Silvester Langdale.

"Indeed, Mr. Langdale, a young gentleman in your position, and with your prospects, might pray to have the same jury; for fancy the renown that you

would gain by inducing the same jury to acquit the man upon his trial."

"Certainly that would be a triumph for the advocate," said Silvester Langdale.

"Well, then, although you will not have the same jury, that is, the same persons, you will probably have precisely the same class of men; for a British jury would seem to be a distinctive class,—just as your county justices are," said Mr. Baskerville.

"You mean the juries of our criminal courts."

"Yes, common juries, as they are called. And you think that Abel Barnes may entrust his defence to your hands, Mr. Langdale?"

"I have already said that such a case is that for which my ambition could have prayed," said Silvester Langdale.

"Very good. Then to-morrow I will obtain the depositions, and in the course

of the next day, or the day after, I will send you your brief, Mr. Langdale."

The intimation thrills through the very heart of Silvester Langdale. The dream of young ambition is very alluring.

"And let me tell you, Mr. Langdale, that the ordeal that you will have to go through will be a trying one. You will be watched by cynically critical eyes. I believe, however, that you will be able to strike them powerless. They will be close around you; they will be in front of you, and they will be on each side of you. Their effect depends upon yourself. And you will have other eyes to watch you. The aristocracy of birth will be there, above you; and the judicial bench will be in judgment upon you before the bar, as well as upon those behind it. Abel Barnes's predilection may be but the agent through whose instrumentality inexplicable fortune works. From what

I have seen of you, I believe it is, and I shall be glad to congratulate you upon it."

"Sir, I scarcely know how to thank you," said Silvester Langdale, warmly.

"Why should you thank me, Mr. Langdale?" said Marl Baskerville, rising from his seat and taking up his hat. "I am merely an agent. I have discharged a mission. You have nothing to thank me for, because I have no feeling in the matter, although—and, believe me, I never flatter any one, Mr. Langdale—I freely acknowledge that I can well understand Abel Barnes's prepossession. No, I have no feeling in the matter. My course of life, my profession, those with whom I have for so many years been thrown in contact, have thrust out from my heart what the world understands as feeling. I have but one feeling there, and that is my own, and is not that which

the world understands by the terms. Good day, Mr. Langdale. I will send you your brief, and I shall probably see you again frequently."

And the next minute Marl Baskerville was descending the staircase.

Silvester Langdale stands in the centre of the chamber for a few moments, almost bewildered. The interview that he has just had with Marl Baskerville was so unexpected, the proposition he had made was so far beyond even the sanguine hope which he had cherished upon entering the portals of his new profession, that it can be no matter for wonder that he is somewhat scared. The buoyant ambition of an ardent aspirant, however, very speedily dispels even the semblance of such a feeling, and so Langdale experiences a kind of bounding sensation. It seems as though it would be a relief to take a spring into the air, and he feels himself

irresistibly drawing himself up to his full height. And then, again, he experiences a momentary depression. For, wholly unbidden, the scene of the death of his fellow-usher at Nicholas Darvill's is vividly presented to his mind, and this draws audible words from his lips:—

"I little dreamt, good fellow," he soliloquizes aloud, "that your terrible last scene would be the opening of my career. And I am at once almost without a guide, save my own strong, hearty purpose and self-faith, to show myself before the world, and dare the ordeal of success or failure. Well, I am ready for the ordeal. I am young, too young perhaps, for such a responsibility; and yet why? Pitt was prime minister of England at three-and-twenty. Yes, yes! I have courage, I have faith, I have hope, and I have strength of purpose, as I think." And he seemed to knit himself

together as he cried, in a joyous tone, "And may I not exclaim, as Glo'ster did,—

"Why now my golden dream is out,
Ambition, like an early friend, throws back
My curtains, to tell me what I dreamt was true!"

And Silvester Langdale paced up and down the room rapidly.

CHAPTER VII.

A BOUDOIR NEAR TO KENSINGTON GARDENS.

MARL BASKERVILLE proceeded from Silvester Langdale's chambers in Gray's Inn to his own residence, which was situated in Spring Gardens. It was an unpretending-looking house, but its situation was most convenient for Marl Baskerville's operations. It was on the confines of the aristocratic west and the plebeian east of the mighty metropolis. It was a point from which Marl Baskerville could radiate, as it were. The metropolis was as a spider's web, and he was its spider, in its solitary watchfulness; for he was alone in the world, and had been for twenty

years past, during which time his character had become consolidated, as it were, into inflexibility. The interior aspect of his abode was in keeping with his course of life and with his character. It was gloomy and dim, and seemed to be relieved by no colours in its contents. Everything was dark and dismal, and his office was the most dismal room in the house. It was situated in the rear of the premises, and looked upon the blackened wall of the back part of the Admiralty. Dull, and dismal, and dingy as it looked, it yet contained that which was the representative of much wealth. There was a great iron safe in one corner, so thick and massive that you could feel its great weight as you looked at it. Its hinges were thick bolts of iron, and its key might, from its appearance, have dangled from the leathern jerkin of some grim gaoler in mediæval times, and have become him and

his office well. And when the doors of that great safe were opened, they appeared to grind upon their hinges, and to evince a determination only to open slowly. And when they were shut to again they seemed to close crushingly, and with a resolve not to re-open. And such an adjunct to his office was very necessary for Marl Baskerville to possess, for the nature of the profession which he followed required that he should have bank-notes at hand; and those notes were stored in that great safe, together with his boxes, in which were other notes, for which the engraved ones were exchanged.

Marl Baskerville was a money-lender as well as a lawyer, and he practised much more as the one than as the other. His name was as well known at Tattersall's as was that of the first favourite for the next Derby, but it was not used so freely. Men shouted out the name of the Derby

favourite just about that bright time when the Derby may be said to be in everybody's mouth, but they only whispered Marl Baskerville's name. Perhaps they did not care even to do that, because at such a time it was more than dangerous for a member of the Rooms to be suspected of being short of money, and the mention of Marl Baskerville's name might create such a suspicion, and lead to the inference that the person mentioning it had been over-laying his "book."

In Marl Baskerville's safe were the autographs of those who were high and mighty in the land—autographs, however, which he had no desire to preserve; he rather looked hopefully to the time when he should get rid of them, and exchange them for others. Amongst his other callings, Marl Baskerville was what is known as a turf commissioner, that is, a person who invests upon the chances of

a horse those large sums of money that we see quoted daily in the papers as a branch of the commercial transactions of the nation. It is an office that requires much shrewdness, great care, and no little *finesse*, as we shall probably see as we become better acquainted with Marl Baskerville and his professional pursuits.

Marl Baskerville proceeded, as we have said, from the chambers of Silvester Langdale to his own residence in Spring Gardens, but he did not remain there long. He went at once into his office, and found several letters lying on his desk. There was one, however, that seemed to attract his immediate attention. It was a small, three-cornered note, with a superscription in a lady's handwriting. He at once opened it, read its contents, smiled, and put the note in his pocket. He then opened the other letters, and, having read them, unlocked a drawer in

his library table, and placed them therein, and then took up his hat and went out again. At the end of the street he hailed a cab, and directed the driver to convey him to Kensington.

The particular spot to which the cabman was directed to drive was in a street not far from the Gate. It did not contain many houses, but they were nearly all detached, and were enclosed in their own gardens. At the door of one of these the cab stopped, and Marl Baskerville was at once admitted to the lady of the house. He was shown into a spacious room that was fitted up with every appliance of luxury that the ingenuity of man, or the skill of accomplished artificers, could suggest. The room was a delightful specimen of light and elegant luxury. Its furniture—that furniture which the upholsterer and the cabinet-maker supply—was of the most costly description. The curtains to

the windows were of embossed amber satin; the chairs and sofas were covered with a corresponding material and fashion; the carpet felt to the tread as soft and yielding and as springy as moss. Small tables were distributed about the room, covered with glittering elegances. The mantel-shelf bore an immense ormolu clock, with bronze figures a foot high, representing a flight of angels. Depending from the centre of the room was a massive chandelier, with long crystal pendants, each glittering in the sunshine with its prismatic colours. One end of the room opened into an extensive conservatory, in which were arranged choice flowers, native and exotic, blooming brilliantly; and in the centre of the whole was an artificial cascade, which plashed down over pieces of rock, and amongst ferns and mosses.

The moment Marl Baskerville was

announced, a lady who was reclining on one of the artistic sofas that adorned the room, and reading, sprang to her feet, and threw the book she was perusing impetuously from her, utterly regardless of its course, for it struck against one of the small tables that we have referred to, shivering into atoms a beautiful ornament that stood beneath a glass shade. The accident, however, did not appear to give the lady the least concern, for she bounded towards Marl Baskerville, and exclaimed as she did so,—

"Well, you are a dear, good man, to come so quickly to my call."

She was a tall, commanding, handsome girl, of about nineteen years of age. She had large, brilliant blue eyes, and her forehead was high and expansive. Her hair was a rich auburn, and waved in rolling ringlets down to her waist. She had a mouth that seemed to speak even when

she was silent. The lips were almost imperceptibly apart, and this seemed to stamp a perpetual smile upon her countenance. Her cheeks were full, but they were not what is termed plump, and they exhibited that undefinable pink which blends with the edges of the tea-scented rose. Her countenance was full of animation, her eyes sparkled with joyousness, and her carriage would have been worthy of that Egyptian queen for whose love Mark Antony considered all the world well lost.

"You are a dear, good man, to come so quickly to my call," she cried, as she took Marl Baskerville's hat from his hand, and placed it on a small inlaid table. "Now sit down; I want to talk to you seriously."

Marl Baskerville smiled expressively.

"Oh yes, I do," she said, "more seriously than usual."

"The same theme as usual?" Marl Baskerville inquired.

"Oh, of course; I want money, you know, if that is what you mean;" and the young lady laughed. It was a ringing, joyous, hearty laugh.

Marl Baskerville shrugged his shoulders.

"Now, for goodness' sake, don't perform those weirdish shrugs. They would do for the evil genius in a pantomime, but not for you, Baskerville, not for you."

Marl Baskerville elevated his eyebrows, and said,—

"Some people perhaps think that I am an evil genius."

"Well, let them think it; what do you care? I am sure you are not the man to care anything about what anybody thinks. In fact, you have as little to care about as I have;" and she laughed out merrily again.

Marl Baskerville cast a hurried glance round the room, and echoed her last words to himself,—"As little to care about as

she has!" What was the rapid current of his thought at that instant, as he repeated those words to himself?

"But how can you want money?" Marl Baskerville inquired of the beautiful girl who was standing near him.

"Oh, I know what that question implies," she answered, quickly. "You fancy that the Prince left me with an inexhaustible store. So do people generally, I dare say. It was a substantial sum, undoubtedly, but it's all gone."

"All gone!" exclaimed Marl Baskerville, in unfeigned surprise.

"Well, all but about a hundred or two, which is about the same thing, you know."

"You cannot expect such another rich prize. They do not come every year," Marl Baskerville observed, rather obscurely.

The young lady, however, seemed very well to understand him.

"Perhaps not to the same extent; but although diamond-covered princes may not be picked up every day, there are fine fish to be caught always. My expectations have always been fulfilled, you know. Did I ever break an engagement with you? Come now, tell me that," she cried, suddenly, and with energy.

Marl Baskerville admitted that she never did.

"Then why do you hesitate now?" she inquired, with a toss of her head.

"Why do you assume that I hesitate?"

"Oh, you can't deceive me, you know. I can read a countenance readily enough. When you think that I want to borrow some money, see how the jaw slightly drops"—and with mock seriousness she elongated her own countenance,—"just like that. There is the ghost of a smile, but the smiler almost instantly gives up that ghost, as being unable to support it. Oh,

I can read the thought that lurks behind that drop of the mouth that I refer to. But one word is as good as a thousand—I must have money by to-morrow afternoon."

"Why is it so pressing?" inquired Marl Baskerville.

"The Duke of Breakdown's stud is to be sold to-morrow afternoon, and I must have 'Raglan,' the pick of the lot."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Marl Baskerville, smiling as before.

"He is the best horse across country in all England; I know it well, and come what may I will have him. They have put a reserve of eight hundred upon him, and so you must get me twelve hundred by to-morrow."

"Twelve hundred pounds!" said Marl Baskerville; "that is a large sum;" and he elevated his eyebrows.

"Now, in the name of plain sailing and

straightforward business, don't let us have any of that pantomime. You must do it."

"Then it must be upon a good name."

"You shall have it."

"Whose?"

"Milltown's."

"Milltown's!"

"Ay, Milltown's;" and she laughed—it was a serious, a convincing laugh, so to speak—as she added, "Do you suppose I have forgotten how to play my game?"

Marl Baskerville said he knew she had not.

"Then say that I shall have the money to-morrow afternoon."

"You shall have it."

"There's my hand, Marl Baskerville. You are the friend I have always found you."

"And now tell me what is behind this impulse that I have observed?" Marl Baskerville inquired.

"Oh, you are a cunning man, Baskerville. You saw the impulse, did you? and you shrewdly guessed that there was something behind it, eh? Yes, and you are right. I am going to Goodwood."

Marl Baskerville did not seem much surprised at that intimation.

"Milltown is going, of course; and, Marl Baskerville," she cried, in an excited tone of voice, "there are others going that you and I know;" and she pointed her finger as she spoke, even as though she were pointing out the persons to whom she alluded.

"To whom do you refer?" inquired Baskerville.

"Why, the Montalbans will be there, and she will be there—yes, she is to be there!" and as the majestic beauty spoke her eyes flashed with passion, and her bosom heaved.

"Why, surely you are not jealous of

Miss Montalban?" said Marl Baskerville, smiling.

The lady laughed scornfully, and then exclaimed,—

"Jealous? No, I am not jealous; I am only determined to bring her down."

"How do you mean?"

"She tried to bring me down. Her exalted virtue would have had me thrust from the field. Ha! ha! the strait-laced audacity!"

"I cannot altogether comprehend your allusion," said Marl Baskerville.

"Oh yes, you can," she cried, quietly.

"Believe me, I cannot."

"Do you mean to say that you have not heard of the scene in Leicestershire? Is it possible that you, who are acquainted with every man in the sporting world—you from whom, as it is said, no secrets in that strange world can be kept hidden—is it

possible that you are unacquainted with that scene?"

Marl Baskerville had heard of it, but for the moment he had forgotten the incident, which had been talked of freely in the circles in which he moved, and connected with which he was so well known.

"Of course you knew of it," said the tall beauty, observing the change in the expression of Marl Baskerville's face. "Well, then, that is why I wish to go to Goodwood. She would have me expelled from the field, would she? I was to be warned away from every meeting, was I? My presence was not to be tolerated in the same field with Miss Montalban. I was to be driven off by the huntsman, ha! ha!" cried the tall beauty; but although she laughed, it was plain to see that a tempest was raging in her bosom, which swelled with passion as she paced the room while she was speaking.

"And what do you intend to do at Goodwood?" inquired Marl Baskerville.

"To look her down!" she cried, her countenance flushed with excitement. "Ay, to look her down; to walk by her side on the lawn; to hold my head up proudly by the side of her own; to gratify one of the strongest passions of my woman's heart!" And she struck her breast with her delicate hand, which was clenched with convulsive energy.

"Let me counsel you not to do it," said Marl Baskerville, calmly.

"Not do it!" she exclaimed: "Marl Baskerville, you do not know the passions of the female soul;" and she went up to his side, and grasping his wrist, she cried, in an undertone of excitement, "Suppose the father had stood by your side, and had wronged and humiliated you, what would you have done? what would have been your course?"

She little knew that she had touched one string that vibrated through Marl Baskerville's soul. It was but a wild and aimless sweep of the hand that had touched that chord, and yet she might, if she had been calmer, have observed that her question had gone to the very centre of his heart. It was a question that from that moment secured his devotion to herself and to her schemes. Upon how small a thread the destinies of people may sometimes hang! by what insignificant trifles may they be sometimes influenced!

"Marl Baskerville, you can sympathize with me; I can see that you can;" and as she said this her passion became less, and her excitement was evidently passing away. She smiled, and added playfully, "Now you will not fail me with the money?"

"You are sure of the name?" he said.

"Why ask the question? It is the name that you will take in exchange for

the money. Marl Baskerville, we have had money transactions before."

"We have," he said.

"And I have never failed you?"

"Never."

"Nor will I in this." And then she added abruptly, and again in an excited tone, "Why, do you know that she is thinking of him? but she has no more chance of him than she has of you. Now then, go, for I am engaged for a canter in the Park. To-morrow, then, without fail."

"To-morrow."

And Marl Baskerville left the splendid boudoir and the fascinating presence of Marie Wingrave, the most brilliant horsewoman in Rotten Row.

CHAPTER VIII.

SILVESTER LANGDALE'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN COURT.

In due course, and in due form, Marl Baskerville delivered the brief to Silvester Langdale, who received it from the messenger with his own hands. And never did lover receive his mistress with more rapture, never did speculative merchant witness the arrival of a rich and long-expected argosy with more joy, never did ardent enthusiast look upon what he believed to be the fruition of his hopes with more emotion, than did Silvester Langdale receive those folded sheets of paper which constituted his first brief, and which were to be his introduction to the

great world into whose vortex he was about to enter. He carried the magic document tenderly, and as he laid it upon his office table he gazed upon it with something like awe, and seemed almost afraid to open it. Over and over again he read its inscription, — "The Queen *v.* Abel Barnes. Counsel for the prisoner, Mr. Silvester Langdale." And as he did so he found himself catching his breath as he drew long respirations, and the veriest trifle would at that moment have caused him to shed tears, or to have laughed immoderately, for conflicting emotions were agitating his breast—conflicting, and yet so commingled that at one moment he almost trembled with doubt and fear, and nearly at the same instant braced himself up, as it were, with that confidence and hope which are founded upon inherent mental power and determined purpose. In the solitude of that chamber in Gray's

Inn, shut out for the moment from all the world, there, in the midst of the solitude of the heart of London—for what solitude is more oppressing than that of him who is alone, without a friend, in this great metropolis?—perhaps that was the most trying moment of Silvester Langdale's life. It was an ordeal that was indeed a trying one to bear, as he stood alone in that sombre chamber, almost dazzled by the mystic light which appeared to him to be the dawning of the golden sun of his good fortune. It was but natural that he should feel excited; it would have been strange indeed, and have indicated a callous heart, if at such a moment he had experienced no emotion.

It was some time before he could sit calmly down, and open the document which contained the reality of his new-born hopes, and when he at length did so, it was with a trembling hand and a beating

heart; but as he read the instructions which his "brief" contained, the weakness—for such, of course, it was—passed away, and his whole soul became absorbed in the task, the responsibility that was now cast upon him, and he rose from the perusal of the details of Abel Barnes's case fired with determination and strengthened in resolve. It was a case which was well calculated to excite the sympathies of a generous heart; it was a case in which the impulses of a kindly nature would be strongly roused, even in a stranger whose sympathies were rewarded with material acknowledgments. But Silvester Langdale was no stranger, as we have seen. Although in no way connected with the lamentable affair which had so strangely brought him fortune—a dismal cloud, out of which a bright sun shone for him,—yet he felt that he was closely connected with it, and the scene of Margale's death-bed was in his mind a

portent of a dread picture in which he was at once actor and spectator. He felt, in the seriously trying ordeal of his first appearance before the world, utterly unknown even by name, standing as he would be amidst strangers, and before a solemn tribunal, that his connection with the subject of the inquiry would nerve him in his efforts, and imbue him with that confidence which should justify what otherwise might appear a step to be characterized as temerity.

It was known that the trial of Abel Barnes, as it was a charge of murder, would not come on for three or four days after the commencement of the sessions; but Silvester Langdale was in attendance as soon as the court opened on the Monday morning, in order that he might accustom himself to the place in which he was soon so conspicuously to appear. When he entered the court the seats at

the table appropriated to counsel were all occupied, and for a minute or two he had to stand in the gangway that leads down to the table. He was a stranger, a new man; perhaps he was thought by some in that court an interloper; and so, as he stood at the bottom of the gangway, all eyes were turned upon him, especially those around the barristers' table. He could see that whisperings were going on respecting him, and although he could not hear what was being said, he knew well enough what was the purport of the observations that were being indulged in. Immediately opposite was one young and impulsive member of the bar, who had attended the court for more than seven years, but who had never even "smelt a brief," as he himself would observe; although in personal appearance he was conspicuous enough, and therefore might have attracted the attention of some of

the legal wolves who prowl about the purlieus of that court, for he had a big round face, fringed with large red whiskers. This interesting ornament of the bar of England, as soon as Silvester Langdale entered the court, brought his eye-glass to bear full upon him, and stared point-blank at him, as though he were some unusual phenomenon, just descended through the roof, or come up from the cells beneath. With an unmistakable action of the elbow he called the attention of his immediate neighbour, another member of the bar, of long standing but short practice—a gentleman with a face as sharp as a hatchet, but with wit about as dull as a grindstone; but there was no necessity to call his attention to Silvester Langdale's presence, because he was already indulging in a supercilious stare at the new-comer. Gradually the eyes of the whole bar were centred upon Sil-

vester, and of course the bench followed the bar; the bench at the moment consisting of the recorder and two aldermen, —the one short and thick, and so plethoric about the neck and face that his tongue protruded from his mouth, and he breathed stertorously; and the other so tall and thin that when he stood up he looked like a wafer man, attired in a purple silk gown, fringed with fur.

Silvester Langdale stood the battery of these legal eyes right manfully, and although at the first, just for an instant, he felt a little nervous, he boldly confronted that united bar, and gazed around him with the utmost self-possession. Indeed, so unmistakable was his self-possession that the briefless one, with the large round countenance with red fringe, remarked to his neighbour that Silvester had "cheek enough for a young 'un, and no mistake."

Presently the members of the bar sat a little closer together, so that Silvester Langdale was enabled to take a seat at the table, and as he did so the gentleman next to whom he sat cast a sidelong glance at him, and scanned him out of the corners of his eyes. Emboldened by this proceeding, he turned his head quite round, and stared full into Silvester's face, as though he desired to stamp a photograph thereof upon his own brain. Silvester Langdale could not refrain from smiling, and so he smiled, not exactly at the learned gentleman next to him, because he looked across the court; but the learned gentleman himself felt that the smile was intended for him, and so he patronized Silvester by turning his back full upon him.

The bar, however, very soon got reconciled to the presence of the new-comer, or, at all events, they ceased to scrutinize

him as a curiosity, and so he was left to himself, to look upon the scene around him. The *habitués* of that court had their separate functions marked upon their countenances as distinctly as though they had been printed there. It was not difficult for a sagacious observer to distinguish which were the jurymen, which the witnesses, which the several officers of the court individually, and the offices they filled; which the barristers' clerks, and above all, which were the attorneys regularly practising in that court. These last were as distinctive as though they had been labelled. There were three of them present. One was an old man, with a countenance so seamed that it appeared to have been ploughed, and his skin was of the colour and of the texture of parchment. About his mouth there was a very remarkable expression. It seemed to have been drawn on one side, as with a string.

He spoke apparently without any motion of the lips; and he held down his head while in conversation, as though he were speaking with his ear rather than with his mouth. What a course of villany could that man record as the reminiscences of his professional career! Another member of the same fraternity then present was one much younger in years, and with an entirely different cast of countenance. Indeed, he was rather good-looking. He had an open countenance, and was tall in stature. He had a very considerable practice amongst the most degraded clients of that august court. In fact, he and the man with the ploughed face divided nearly the whole of the practice therein. They took the cream—we were going to write, the scum—of that terrible social cauldron, Newgate.

Silvester Langdale had an ample opportunity, during the three days that he visited

the court, to become acquainted with its practice, for it was very simple. During that time, too, he had become thoroughly habituated to it, even as though he were an old practitioner therein; and after the first day he was no longer an object of curiosity to the scrutinizing bar, but was received by them as an installed member of the fraternity. Silvester Langdale felt quite at home and at his ease amongst them. He had ample opportunity of observing the amenities of the bench and the bar, before which and of which he was now a practising member. Indeed, on the second day this opportunity was something more than conspicuous,—in a case of petty larceny which was being tried, and in which a leading member of that bar was engaged for the prisoner. When the time for his address to the jury came, this legal functionary impressively and at once threw himself into the case which he had to make

out for his client, and as the evidence for the prosecution had been entirely conclusive, and admitted of no doubt whatever, he had recourse to the expedient of misquoting it. This course was allowed for some time by the presiding functionary, but at length he ventured to suggest that the learned counsel was entirely perverting the evidence which had been adduced. Upon this the learned counsel, thus checked, turned fiercely upon the presiding judge, and requested to be informed if he were sitting there for the purpose of instructing him (the learned counsel) in his business.

"I sit here to administer justice," the judge remarked.

"But you don't sit there to teach me how I ought to conduct a case," cried the arrister, fiercely, and casting a meaning glance at the jury, as though he would say, "Have the goodness to observe how I will put him down."

"One of my functions is to preserve order and regularity in this court," observed the judge.

"And one of my functions is to defend the prisoner at the bar!" roared the learned counsel.

"But I cannot allow you to misquote the evidence that has been taken," said the judge.

"The jury are the judges of that, my lord; I was addressing them;" and the learned counsel cast a kind of reverential glance towards the jury.

"Proceed," said the judge.

And the learned counsel did proceed.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "the institution of trial by jury is one of the noblest—*the* noblest—of the institutions of our glorious constitution, and the bar of England has been the great palladium of English liberty. You, gentlemen, are now the representatives of the sacred in-

stitution of trial by jury; and I, unworthy though I may be, unworthy as I know I am"—and he tapped his breast, as indicating that he nevertheless was a man of principle,—"represent the great palladium of British liberty. In former days of our history, gentlemen, when the liberties of the subject have been attacked by despotic power, the bar of England has stood up for the persecuted and the oppressed."

A rather intelligent juryman here observed that he thought that in all those cases there were counsel on both sides.

"Sir, I admire your depth of reasoning," said the learned counsel, bowing profoundly to the observant juryman; "that is true enough, although it is not every one who has the sagacity to observe it; but in the times to which I refer, the counsel for the Crown, in the cases of oppression and tyranny, were miserable hirelings and place-holders—men who looked at nothing

beyond the despotism of the ruling powers of the day, men who were, I may say, not to use too strong a figure of speech, outside the great palladium of British liberty. In those days, gentlemen, a judge upon the bench could overawe a jury and browbeat an advocate; but those days have passed away, no such judge can sit upon the bench in our time;" and in the excitement of the moment he pointed his finger full upon the judge who was presiding.

The learned judge—

"Did address
Himself to motion, like as he would speak,"

but he checked himself—evidently, however, with an effort. The learned counsel observed this, and seemed to become more emboldened.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he continued, "I may have a weak case, or a strong one; I may be counsel for the prisoner, or have

to conduct the prosecution; but whatever be my position, however humble may be my efforts, as I know they are, no judge shall ever turn me aside from the straight path of my strict duty. Gentlemen, although we may no longer witness the terrible spectacle of a judge overawing a jury and browbeating an advocate, yet, as you have seen, we may have a legal president prejudging a case, and attempting, metaphorically, to trip up a counsel in the discharge of his sacred duty in behalf of an unhappy prisoner."

This was too much for the judge, and so he warmly said that he could not sit there and allow the court to be insulted by imputations which were as gross as they were uncalled for.

The learned counsel for the prisoner drew himself up, looked full across at the jury, and then threw at them a shrug, which said, as plainly as any language could

do, "Now, gentlemen, what do you think of the difficulties of my position?"

The judge, addressing the jury, said:—

"Gentlemen, while I preside in this court I will not allow its decorum—that decorum without which justice cannot be properly administered—to be infringed, or the dignity of the bench to be violated."

"Does your lordship intend that observation for me?" inquired the learned counsel, sneeringly.

"Most unquestionably I do," the learned judge replied.

"Then I have to say this," cried the advocate, laughing scornfully, "that while I have the honour of practising in this court, I will do my duty to the prisoner and the gentlemen of the jury, in spite of the prejudices of any Methodistical old woman who may happen, by a strange freak of fate, to be placed in the

responsible position of president of the court."

"If these observations are continued I shall feel it my duty to adjourn the court. I have to request that this unseemly altercation may be brought to a close," said the judge.

"Very well, then; have the goodness to allow me to conduct my case according to my own discretion, and don't attempt to prejudice the jury," cried the learned counsel, in a tone that he might have used towards a cabman with whom he had had a dispute respecting the amount of a fare.

The case was accordingly allowed to proceed, as the counsel for the prisoner had suggested; and taking advantage of the concession, he lashed himself into a fury, threw his arms wildly about, and indulged in such energetic gesticulation that he cleared a vacant space on each

side of him. He dashed his brief upon the table, upset the inkstand that was before him, and finally, in his peroration, jumped upon the seat behind, and from that elevation frothed out a stream of words, full of sound and fury indeed, but nothing more.

Then came the summing up of the learned judge, who, having read over the evidence to the jury, alluded to the scene which had taken place in the course of the trial. After referring to his long experience on the bench, the uniform courtesy with which he was treated by the bar generally, and the high estimation in which he was held by the world at large, he implored the jury to dismiss from their minds all recollection of what had but a few moments before occurred, even as though it had never happened, for it was highly essential that the pure stream of justice should not be polluted

by even the resemblance or shadow of personality. He therefore again appealed to them to dismiss entirely from their minds the recollection of the misunderstanding which had arisen between the learned counsel and himself.

Judges on the bench generally appear to have the notion that the mind of a jury is like a schoolboy's slate, from which impressions can be removed at will, and without the least exertion. If an atrocious crime has been committed, with the details of which all the newspapers of the land have been teeming for a fortnight before, a jury will be seriously requested to dismiss from their minds all that they may have happened to have read upon the subject. Sometimes, when the subject-matter of the investigation has been the topic of conversation amongst all classes, and has been commented upon for days previously by the public press, the pre-

siding functionary will suggest that possibly some of the jury may have heard comments out of doors on the case; thus leading to the inference that juries are not of the general public, and take no interest in its affairs. In all cases the jury are told to look upon their mind as a slate, and to treat it accordingly, —that is, rub all recent impressions out.

Such was the initiation which Silvester Langdale received into the mysteries and amenities of his new profession, upon his first appearance in court, and it must be confessed it was not calculated to give him a very elevated notion of the dignity of the tribunal before which he was to make his professional *début*. He, however, congratulated himself that the court before which the case in which he was to appear would be taken would be differently constituted from that in which

the disorderly and most undignified scene he had just witnessed had taken place, as the judges would be altogether of a different stamp and standing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRIAL OF ABEL BARNES.

THE trial of Abel Barnes was fixed for the third day of the sessions, and as the case was one of murder, the galleries and places set apart for the free accommodation of the general public were besieged by eager applicants at the opening of the court, and the doorkeepers—or money-takers, perhaps we should more appropriately designate them—obtained proportionately high prices for the privilege of free admission to this interesting public court of justice. Viscount Montalban, in right of his position as a peer of the realm, was accommodated with a seat on the bench,

between two aldermen, one a tallow-chandler, and the other a raw hide merchant; and the two civic functionaries—attired, of course, in their purple gowns edged with fur—smirked and ogled at their friends in different parts of the court, indicative of the high gratification they felt at having a lord between them.

It had, of course, got noised about amongst the profession that the young unknown barrister, who had been observed to enter the court at the opening of the sessions, was to be entrusted with the defence of the prisoner, and the bar of the court had been struck with something like consternation when the intimation was conveyed to them. The men of standing in the court—that is, those who had the most practice—looked at one another, and smiled sarcastically; and one of them was heard to ejaculate, "Poor devil!" But whether the implied sympathy was

intended for the prisoner or his advocate the world has never been informed. The briefless ones discussed the matter indignantly. What next? they reasoned. The profession was coming to something indeed! In former days, long study and years of patience were sure to produce their just reward; but now men of experience and observation were to be thrust aside by unknown whipper-snappers and upstarts. Every gentleman had a different form of expression for his suggestive discontent, but they all agreed upon one point with wonderful unanimity, and that was of course the exhibition would be a preposterous and ludicrous failure; and with this comforting assurance they flocked into the court to witness Silvester Langdale rush upon his own professional destruction.

When Silvester entered the court, on the morning of the trial of Abel Barnes,

the eyes of the whole bar were turned upon him; but although he was a little flushed he did not appear at all nervous. A vacancy was immediately opened for him at the table, and he took his seat thereat, placing his brief before him. Immediately behind him sat Marl Baskerville, and as soon as the young barrister had settled in his place, the attorney money-lender and turf commissioner whispered to him,—

"How are your nerves?"

"As firm as steel," Silvester Langdale replied, in a tone of voice that was confirmatory of his declaration.

"They will need to be."

"They are."

The next moment the clerk of the arraigns rose, and, addressing the gaoler who was seated at one side of the dock, said,—

"Bring up Abel Barnes."

And Abel Barnes was brought forward from behind, at the back of the dock, accordingly.

"I appear for the prosecution, my lord," said a stout gentleman, who sat at a little distance from Silvester Langdale, at the same time rising and making an obeisance to the presiding judge.

"Is the prisoner defended?" the judge inquired.

"I appear for the prisoner, my lord," said Silvester Langdale, rising and bowing also.

"Mr. —— eh?" said the judge, with his pen in his hand, and looking with a smile towards, and over his spectacles at, the young barrister.

"Silvester Langdale, my lord."

The learned judge wrote the name down, and several of the briefless ones looked at each other, and in a subdued voice said, "Silvester Langdale!" in a tone which

implied that even the name was an impertinence.

The trial then proceeded, but the counsel for the prosecution had scarcely concluded his opening address when the judge said he had been looking over the depositions, and it appeared to him that the capital charge could not be maintained, and therefore the learned counsel had better confine themselves to the second count of the indictment, that of manslaughter.

The counsel for the prosecution said that such was the course which he intended to pursue, but his lordship would see that the prisoner had been committed—upon the coroner's warrant for murder, and by the justices for manslaughter.

"They are clearing the way for you," whispered Marl Baskerville to Silvester Langdale.

"I am sorry for it," was the whispered reply.

"Your lordship will observe that there are two indictments," said the counsel for the prosecution; "and, if your lordship pleases, I will take the second one, which is for the minor charge of manslaughter, first."

"That will perhaps be the better course," said the judge.

And so the charge of manslaughter was taken. The evidence that was adduced was precisely the same as upon the inquest, and before the magistrates at Guildhall; but the wife of the unfortunate deceased, or rather, the woman who had passed as his wife, was not so violent or demonstrative in giving her testimony as she was at the investigation at Guildhall. Indeed, she was quite subdued on the trial.

Silvester Langdale did not attempt anything like a searching cross-examination of the witnesses, inasmuch as he was not

instructed to dispute the facts; they were indeed indisputable. He questioned the woman with regard to the attempted use of a knife by the deceased, but nothing could induce her to admit that he had had a knife in his hand at all. The evidence of the policemen, however, was conclusive upon the point: when they picked the deceased up at the foot of the stairs he had a large and formidable knife clasped firmly in his hand.

The case for the prosecution having closed, the moment for Silvester Langdale's own trial came. The ordeal upon which his success or failure in his profession was to be based had now to be encountered, and the counsel for the prisoner rose to meet it. There was a sonorous cry of silence from the usher, the members of the bar settled themselves in their places, attentive, scrutinizing, and critical listeners, and the learned judge

looked down encouragingly upon the young barrister, as he rose to perform the duty which had been assigned to him.

Silvester Langdale was possessed of a magnificent voice, and he had acquired the faculty of modulating it without effort, as the due expression of emotion or passion required. There was a charm in the voice, and in its modulated tones, which gave more than ordinary force to the words of the speaker. We have said that he had acquired the power of modulating his voice according to the dictates of passion or emotion, but this is not strictly accurate. The faculty was a natural one; he had only developed it. Such a faculty cannot be wholly acquired. As the gift of poesy must be born with a man, so the man who is not born an actor can never become an actor by any studious process whatever. We know that it is a

kind of canon of the stage, that no man can become an actor who has not gone through a certain course of probation, and study, and practice. The canon is a fallacious one. The truly great tragedian is as great an actor when he first places his foot upon the stage as when he has risen to the eminence of universal popularity. David Garrick, John Kemble, and Edmund Kean were great actors when they played their first part, and they needed no instruction, no study. Study will not create genius, although it may polish it where it is found to exist.

In addition to the advantage of a fine voice, Silvester Langdale exhibited graceful action, this again being natural, and not acquired. He could emphasize a sentence with a wave of his hand, and he could exhibit energy even in the movement of his finger. It is but seldom that we find a noble voice and the power of

expressive action combined in the same person; still less frequently do we discover, in addition to those two natural gifts, a third, which is greater than either —that of mental power, displayed in high oratory. These three great qualifications were possessed by Silvester Langdale, and the opportunity was now presented to him of exhibiting them to the world.

When he rose to address the jury he himself felt surprised at the perfect self-possession which he displayed. He did not even feel nervous in the position in which he stood, although the eyes of every one in that court were fixed upon him. Presently, so far from any nervousness agitating him, he felt strongly confident in his own powers, which seemed, indeed, to be newly opening even to himself. He felt, he deeply felt, the cause which he had to advocate, and so he threw his whole soul earnestly into it.

In feeling, and at the same time glowing terms, he depicted the death-bed scene at which he had, as if by a strange coincidence, assisted; he painted in terrible colours the encounter between the prisoner and the deceased; and he drew a touching picture of the anguish of mind of the prisoner,—anguish that was the more deeply imbittered by the man's afflictions which had so recently culminated in what was called his home, when the prisoner contemplated the fatal result which had ensued. The young advocate denounced with strong language that mockery of an investigation which could have resulted in a charge of wilful murder against the prisoner; and, while paying a just tribute to the laws of the country, he said he feared that those laws were too frequently perverted, and made the instruments of wrong, through the agency of incompetence and ignorance. He fer-

vidly declared his conviction that the prisoner could have been actuated by no malicious motive; nay, he believed that it was a noble impulse which had led to the catastrophe which had made the prisoner amenable to the laws of his country, an impulse born of reverence for the sacred dead. The deceased would have rushed into that terrible presence, and have desecrated the chamber of death, and the prisoner stood between him and the sacrilege, for such it was, seeing that the dead are sacred; he would have ruthlessly violated that sanctity, and have offered ribald indignity to the emaciated corpse of him who was the stark tenant of that denuded chamber; this in his drunken fury he was endeavouring to do when the stalwart arm of the prisoner arrested his course, and thrust him back from the dismal chamber of death. This it was that had aroused in the mind of the deceased the

passion; that he had drawn the coward's weapon, the assassin's knife, and rushed upon the prisoner, who in his own defence had struck the miscreant down, unhappily to rise no more. Why, there was a manliness in the deed which claimed our admiration; it was the prompting of that spirit which animated heroes, and led them on to glory. It was but the fitting punishment of a dastard, the rough retribution which true courage would suggest. And was this to be branded as a crime? In the name of justice and of right, in the name of the best instincts of our nature, he protested against such a thought, and in the name of a great beneficence he called upon the jury to declare before the world that the unhappy man at the bar was guilty of no crime, and had committed no wrong.

When Silvester Langdale sat down there was a manifestation of applause, at

which the usher indignantly cried out "Silence!" and the learned judge looked over his spectacles full into the face of the gaoler, who stood by the side of the prisoner, as though the applause had proceeded from him, and said,—

"If that indecent exhibition is repeated, I will commit the parties."

Judges always say this in such cases, and yet they must know that it is an empty threat, and cannot be carried out unless the whole of the British public then assembled in the court are committed *en masse*. And the threat invariably produces a ludicrous effect,—because, of the people who have applauded, some receive the rebuke with solemn, supernaturally solemn, countenances; others receive it with a leer and a jest; and the jury invariably look upon it with stolid indifference. By-the-bye, suppose the jury in such a case were to manifest their appro-

bation by open applause, what form would the rebuke of the judge then take?

The address of Silvester Langdale had undoubtedly created a profound impression, and many whispered comments upon it ran round the circle of the barristers' table.

The judge inquired if the learned counsel had any witnesses to call, and Marl Baskerville hurriedly conveyed some intimation to the young barrister, who immediately said,—

"Yes, my lord, I have an important witness to call, who will speak to the peaceable disposition of the prisoner generally."

"I think the prisoner has been described as a pugilist, has he not?" inquired the judge, looking over his spectacles, with a meaning smile upon his countenance.

"That is his calling, my lord, and it is on that account that I desire to call

the witness to his character," observed Silvester Langdale.

"As you please," acquiesced the judge.

"Viscount Montalban," said Silvester Langdale, turning to where the noble lord was seated between the two aldermen.

Lord Montalban started to his feet as though he had been struck, and exclaimed,—

"Call me?"

"I am instructed to call your lordship, as I am informed that you have seen something of the prisoner," said Silvester Langdale.

"Oh, very good. I'll tell you what I know about him with pleasure," said Lord Montalban, recovering from the momentary surprise into which he had been thrown, while the prisoner looked eagerly at his noble patron, as though in doubt whether he would say good or evil of

him. The doubt, however, was soon resolved, for the noble witness, in answer to the questions that were put to him, after the usual formula, said he had known the prisoner for some years, and, notwithstanding his calling, had known him to be a peaceable, well-disposed man.

"Never harmed a fly, my lord, knowingly," said the prisoner, speaking for the first time since he had pleaded, and casting a kind of imploring look at the judge.

At the close of Lord Montalban's evidence the jury whispered to one another, and nodded their heads impressively; and it was plain enough to observe that the speech for the defence and the evidence to character had left a strong impression on their minds.

The learned judge succinctly summed up the evidence, and merely left one question for the jury to decide, Had the

prisoner struck the deceased maliciously, or had he done so in self-defence against what could only be termed the atrocious, un-English, brutal, and dastardly use, or attempted use of the knife by the deceased?—a habit, the judge said, which was unhappily prevalent amongst a certain class, and which, when it came under his judicial notice in th eshape of a charge against a prisoner, he invariably visited with the utmost rigour that the law would allow. The question, then, that the jury had to determine was, whether the blow by which the deceased had met his death was given to resist a dastardly attack with a knife, or was it maliciously given in an ordinary brawl?

The jury immediately returned a verdict of Not Guilty, with an addendum to mark their strong reprobation and horror of a resort to the knife in personal encounters.

The verdict, notwithstanding the previous admonition of the judge, was received with applause, especially in the galleries; and the prisoner was ordered to be forthwith discharged. And as he left the bar he bowed profoundly, and evidently gratefully, to the judge, and then more profoundly still to his young advocate.

When Silvester Langdale retired to the robing-room, at the back of the court, he was met in the corridor by Lord Montalban, who advanced to him, and with a smile said—

"Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Langdale, upon the great success of your *début* in public. Your address was very masterly and convincing."

"Your lordship is pleased to say so."

"But may I ask you, Mr. Langdale, how it was that you came to call me as a witness?" and his lordship still smiled approvingly as he put the question.

"Simply because I was instructed, my lord," said Silvester; "I had not at the time the honour of even knowing your lordship's person."

"Marl Baskerville instructed you, did he?"

"He was the attorney from whom I received my brief, my lord."

"Here he comes," said Lord Montalban, looking down the corridor; and the next instant Marl Baskerville joined them.

"Your lordship will, I am sure," he said, "see the motive I had in calling you as a witness, and forgive it. It suddenly struck me that your lordship's evidence, following immediately upon the brilliant oration of our young friend here, would be conclusive with the jury."

"It was the eloquence of our young friend, Baskerville, that did it," said his lordship; and then, turning to Silvester

Langdale, he added, "Sir, I am extremely glad I have had the opportunity of making your acquaintance. If your engagements will permit, will you do me the honour of dining with me to-morrow evening, at seven, in Park Lane?"

Lord Montalban was not half so much astounded at being called as a witness as Silvester Langdale was when he received this invitation, and he felt hot all over his head and face as he did himself the distinguished honour of accepting his lordship's invitation.

CHAPTER X.

SILVESTER LANGDALE'S NEW CLERK.

SILVESTER LANGDALE returned to his chambers in Gray's Inn on foot, and as he walked along the crowded streets he was perfectly oblivious of all that was passing around, noisy and perhaps exciting as it was. He was, so to speak, wrapped up in his own emotions; ambition was indeed now bright upon his mind. Why, in a few more hours he would be famous. He seemed instinctively to feel this. It was not anticipation—it was not hope; it was conviction, which the approaching reality seemed to cast before it into his soul. He walked along those crowded

streets with a light and elastic step, and a light and bounding heart. His bosom's lord not only sat lightly on its throne, but throbbed in the excitement of ecstasy. Oh, how ardent is the hope of youth! It gilds success with glory, and decks ambition's crown with glittering gems.

When Silvester Langdale arrived at the door of his dingy chamber he found three humble but enthusiastic suppliants there,—suppliants who had come in the fulness of their gratitude to beg the privilege of pouring out their heart-suggested thanks upon him.

"Come in, Barnes; I am not sorry that you have come here," said Silvester Langdale, as he opened the door of his chamber with the latch-key. "Come in."

And Abel Barnes and his wife and their only son entered the chamber of the young advocate, who had that day so well pleaded the cause of the man who,

stalwart as he was, stood before him tremblingly now.

Silvester Langdale requested his visitors to be seated, but they hesitated modestly. He therefore placed a chair for the woman, and she sat down respectfully. Abel Barnes, however, persistently refused to be seated in the presence of him upon whom he looked as his present benefactor.

"Might I be allowed to ask a favour of you, sir?" Abel Barnes inquired, almost tremulously.

"Assuredly, Abel; what is it?"

And the burly pugilist modestly advanced to the library table, at which Silvester had taken his seat.

"Will you let me, sir," he said, in a faltering voice—"will you let me, sir, take your hand?" and his big, broad chest heaved with emotion as he begged this honest favour.

Silvester Langdale put out his hand,

and the man, grasping it fervently, carried it to his lips, big, heavy tears rolling down his brawny cheeks as he did so.

"Now sit down, good fellow, sit down," said Silvester Langdale, soothingly.

"We have been so bold as to come to you, sir, to thank you for your generous assistance in our trouble to-day," said the woman.

"And you are Margale's sister," said Silvester Langdale, turning the subject; "I was not aware that he had any relatives. When he was with me in the country I do not recollect his having mentioned any."

"We have been a strange family, sir," said the woman, "and a strange history ours has been; and yet, perhaps, not more strange than common."

"Indeed!" said Silvester.

"For years past—long, long years—we have not known of each other's

existence, and it was only by accident at last that we were brought together after so long a separation. He, sir, was an only son, and I an only daughter;" and the woman bent her head.

"Pray calm yourself," said Silvester Langdale: "I need not tell you that your story is deeply interesting to me; but, at the same time, if it distresses you to tell it, pray abstain from doing so.

"Distress me! oh no, sir," she answered, bitterly; "it is a relief to me if you will allow me so to trouble you."

He motioned to her to proceed.

"You, sir, know how extensive were the mental acquirements of my poor brother. I fear me those acquirements, great as they were, availed him little, for in his youth I know that he was wild and reckless. But it is not for me to speak of that;" and she said this in a tone which might have been one of self-reproach.

"He was most improvident, I know," said Silvester Langdale. "He lived for the hour, and cared not for the morrow."

"Too true," said the woman; "and not he alone."

"But how came you to be separated?" asked Silvester Langdale.

"We were idolized by our parents in our youth, and nothing was denied us that we desired. We were educated expensively—look at me now, sir."

And for the first time during the interview the woman wept.

"Never mind, old woman," said Abel Barnes, in a rough voice, but still kindly and soothingly; "never mind, let's hope for a turn of luck: who knows but what this gentleman's kindness to-day is our turn of luck? And it's been a long run of bad that we've had, sir," he said, turning to Silvester Langdale.

"I wish to know the whole of your history," said Silvester to the woman.

She lifted her eyes to his, and said, sorrowfully—

"Not now—not yet—perhaps never."

"I thought you wished to tell it me?"

"Of the separation from my brother, yes. The rest is a blank—a black blank."

"Of your brother, then."

"Our parents died, and we drifted out upon the sea of the world, where all appeared to us to be calm and sunshine, and we never met again until three months ago, and the interval was more than twenty years. We separated in affluence, and with everything bright around us; we met again in desolation—the desolation of abject poverty."

"I've strove hard, sir, all my married life to get a good living," said Abel Barnes; "but luck must be born with a man, he never can get it without. He

may have pluck, and all that there; but if he hasn't got no luck he must go to the bad."

Silvester Langdale smiled, but did not attempt to controvert the philosophy of the pugilist. It was part of the moral code of the prize-fighter's profession.

"He has always been kind to me, and kinder, I do believe, when he knew all that the dark blank of my life concealed," said the woman.

"I am exceedingly glad to hear this of you, Abel Barnes," said Silvester Langdale; "for, to tell you the truth, I have been led to believe that you fighting men do not as a rule treat your wives as men should do."

"There's plenty of very black sheep amongst us, sir; and when they are black, they're very black indeed. I've been unlucky, sir—very unlucky nearly all my

life, but I never in all my life, sir, struck a woman, or hit a man when he was down."

"You are an honest fellow, Abel," cried Silvester Langdale, "and perhaps, as you say, this is the turning day of your fortunes. You have come here to thank me for my exertions in your behalf to-day. It may be that equal gratitude is due from me. Events in life are strangely blended, and if I can, believe me, good fellow, that I will care for you."

"Oh, sir, you have already cared for me enough," said the man, gratefully.

"What is your boy?" inquired Silvester Langdale.

"He gets a few shillings, sir, by singing in the chorus at one of the music halls," said the woman.

"Only a few shillings?" said Silvester.

"A shilling a night," the woman said.

"I think he told me that you had attended to his education?"

"In the intervals of our struggles for bread," said the woman, "I have not been unmindful of that."

"Is he particularly attached to his present calling?"

"I like it very well, sir; but I should like it a good deal better if I could get some more money for father and mother," the boy said, speaking for the first time during the interview.

"Which do you care most for, the money or the occupation?" inquired Silvester Langdale.

"Oh, the money, sir," the boy answered, hastily.

"How would you like to be with me?"

Abel Barnes clutched his son by the arm, and cried hoarsely, as though he were almost choking—

"Severn, do you hear what the gentleman says?"

"Yes, father," said the boy; and then

addressing the young barrister, he added, "Oh, I should so like it, sir."

"Would you like this dingy room as well as the brilliant music hall?"

"Should I be always with you, sir?" the boy inquired.

"Mostly."

"Then I should like it a good deal better, sir."

Abel Barnes patted his son approvingly on the back.

"You shall come to me, then," said Silvester Langdale.

"Severn, my boy," cried the burly pugilist, in a tone of delight, "your fortune's made. Only think, it was lucky after all that the old villain did break his neck in tumbling down stairs;" and then, thinking he had outstepped the bounds of decorum, he rather ludicrously turned to Silvester Langdale, and said, "Begging your pardon, sir, I didn't mean to say

that, you know; but out of evil comes good sometimes, doesn't it, sir?"

Silvester Langdale was prevented contesting this point, supposing that he had desired to do so, by a knock which was heard at the door.

"Have the goodness to see who is there, my boy, will you?" said Silvester Langdale to Abel Barnes's son; and the boy sprang with alacrity to the door, and opened it.

"Mr. Langdale's chambers?" cried a voice, in a flippant tone, interrogatively.

"Yes," replied the boy, with a little hesitation.

"Are you his clerk?"

"No."

"Where is he, then?"

Silvester Langdale here stepped to the door himself, and outside thereof he encountered a young man, very flashy in appearance, and yet rather shabby in his attire.

"Oh, here's three briefs for Mr. Silvester Langdale, from our people; and precious sharp work we've had to get them ready, —only about three quarters of an hour to do the lot in. Can't say I relish this forcing system."

The speaker had clearly undergone a long course of forcing, and was evidently beginning to run to seed.

"You'll see that Mr. Langdale has 'em directly, will you?"

"I am Mr. Langdale," said that gentleman.

"Oh, beg your pardon, sir," the bearer of the briefs that had undergone the forcing process cried, in an altered tone, and taking off his hat—"beg your pardon, sir; Bluggett's case is fixed first on the list in the morning."

"Very good," said the young barrister.

"Good day, sir," cried the individual who appeared to have run to seed; and

having made a profound bow with his limp hat, he took his way downstairs.

Fortune was beginning to shower her gifts early upon the young barrister. If his visitors had known the nature of the communication that had just been made to him, how gladly would they, humbly and with heartfelt pleasure, have shared the delight which at that moment he naturally felt.

"Abel Barnes, good fellow," said Silvester Langdale, putting his hand on to the big shoulder of the pugilist, "you, as well as your son, shall change your course of life. I'll think of it to-morrow."

"Oh, sir," cried the man, with rough feeling, "I could put my neck under your foot, sir; and I'll show you yet that the character Lord Montalban give me was deserved by me."

"Did Lord Montalban give you a character?" cried the woman, in a tone

that seemed to Silvester Langdale to be one of affright, or of strange agitation.

"Ay, my girl, that he did! and spoke up well for me too—didn't he, sir?"

"He did certainly, and he seems to have taken a sudden fancy to me, for he has invited me to dine with him to-morrow."

"Lord Montalban?" cried the woman, with a kind of gasp, and clasping her hands.

Before Silvester Langdale could remark upon this exclamation, Abel Barnes whispered in his ear, "It's a very strange thing, sir, but she is often took in that way when people's names is mentioned. It's her troubles, poor thing, her troubles."

There was something, however, in the woman's manner which Langdale thought was not indicative of the soundness of Abel Barnes's conclusion upon this point. He thought that it required little pene-

tration to perceive or discover that there was something beneath the surface which had taken deep root in the woman's mind never to be eradicated. The pugilist's theory with regard to it was based, no doubt, upon homely and honest philosophy, but it was very wide of the mark nevertheless, and this Silvester Langdale was not slow to perceive. He, however, did not pursue a subject which was evidently painful to the wife of Abel Barnes, but he resolved within himself to take some future opportunity of observing her bearing further. Reverting to the subject of the boy's entering his service, he said—

"I suppose your son can write tolerably well?"

This question was addressed to the woman, and it seemed immediately to brighten her up. At all events it instantly dispelled the expression of her

countenance, which Silvester Langdale had observed that the mention of the name of Lord Montalban had produced, as she said with something like an expression of pride in her smile,

"Sir, I have taught him to write."

Silvester Langdale inclined his head in compliment to her, and smiled approval.

"And he has been an apt pupil," she added; "for not only has he learnt to write well, but he has imitated my hand exactly."

"I presume, then, that you have something to be proud of in your handwriting?" said Silvester Langdale, smiling.

The question made the woman colour, and she drew back as though she had inadvertently overstepped some imaginary line. Her husband, however, stepped forward to her relief, and with a gratified expression suffusing his whole countenance, he said—

"She's the most beautiful writer you ever see, sir; she was trained at a boarding-school, she was."

"Oh, Abel, what does Mr. Langdale care about that?" said the woman, in a tone which implied that she was in doubt whether to allow her husband to go on with this reference to her early history, or to check him at once.

"And Severn writes just like her, sir; don't you, Severn?" continued the pugilist, turning to his son.

"Yes, sir, you could hardly tell my writing from mother's, sir; it's so like hers," answered the boy, rather proudly.

"The gentleman would like to see it, Severn. I am sure he would; wouldn't you, sir?" and the burly pugilist appealed in a confident tone to the young barrister.

Silvester Langdale was amused at the suggestion, and smilingly intimated his approval of it.

"Now, Severn," exclaimed the pugilist, in quite a dignified tone of authority, "you take Mr. Langdale's pen there, and write what I am a-going to tell you."

And the boy sat down at the desk opposite to Silvester Langdale, and taking the pen in his hand, said he was ready to receive his father's instructions.

"Write this, Severn," the pugilist said: "Abel Barnes and Mrs. Barnes his wife, and Severn Barnes, the son, agrees to do everything that Mr. Silvester Langdale, Esq., tells them."

As soon as the boy commenced writing, Silvester Langdale observed that the woman noiselessly approached the chair where her son was sitting, and, as he wrote, looked over his shoulder; the interest she felt in the proceeding manifested itself in the expression of her countenance. There was another expres-

sion, too, which appeared to be blended with it, and that was one of relief, as it would seem; for when the boy had got to one part of the dictation which his father had given, she said in an under-tone, and in a tone of encouragement to the boy, "That's right, Severn!" and she was evidently pleased.

The boy handed to Langdale what we suppose must be taken as a specimen of his hand-writing, but which had not been asked for as such by the young barrister; and he did so evidently with satisfaction to himself, and certainly with the proudest satisfaction to Abel Barnes, who gazed with a kind of burly dignity upon the proceeding.

Silvester Langdale took the paper from the boy's hand, and he found that the pugilist had in no way exaggerated the ability of his son, with regard to his hand-writing. It had all the elegance of

a female hand, but what perhaps surprised Langdale more than the caligraphy itself, was the fact that the instructions of Abel Barnes had been rendered in correct English; and therefore they had been slightly departed from. It was this that had called forth the subdued expression of approval from the woman, as she gazed over her son's shoulder whilst he was writing that which Abel Barnes had dictated.

"There, sir, that's something like writing, aint it ?" inquired Abel Barnes, quite proudly.

The inspection of the writing was in itself, of course, gratifying to Silvester Langdale. It, however, created a fresh interest in his mind, beyond that of the ordinary satisfaction which it was calculated to produce. He could not but associate with it the woman before him, and she was beginning imperceptibly to

become a kind of mystery in his mind. Probably, however, the feeling was merely an impulsive one.

"It is a beautiful hand!" he said; and as he did so he looked with a kind of newly-awakened curiosity towards the woman.

"I think he'll be a credit to you, sir," said Abel Barnes, confidently.

"Certainly everything seems favourably to recommend him," the barrister replied.

"I am convinced that he will be all that you will desire of him, sir," and as the woman said this, she looked earnestly into the countenance of the young barrister.

And so it was arranged that young Severn Barnes should on the morrow become the clerk of Silvester Langdale.

The three then took their leave of the

young barrister, who, as soon as they were gone, commenced to devour eagerly the contents of the briefs which the seedy young gentleman had placed in his hands.

CHAPTER XI.

SILVESTER LANGDALE DINES WITH VISCOUNT MONTALBAN.

SILVESTER LANGDALE'S experience in dining out had not been extensive. He had not unfrequently been invited to dinner by the parents of some of the pupils at the school in the old street of the old city in the country; and although some of those banquets had been rather grand in their way—at least, some of the people who gave them thought they were,—still they were quite a different sort of affair from those which commonly take place in the purlieus of Park Lane. Some of them were homely and jovial, for they were

held in the best rooms of big farmhouses, which, though they were not surrounded by great parks, with avenues of ancestral trees, beneath which browsed herds of beautiful deer, had glorious grounds withal, stretching around them,—grounds which every year yielded rich crops of fruit and grain of every kind, and about which, in place of the browsing deer, large flocks of stock grazed and grew fat. Others, again, were rather stiff and formal, not to say slightly stuck up; for they took place within the genteel circle of a genteel cathedral city, and the guests thereof treated each other with supercilious politeness, and a chilling warmth of ardent friendship, which is oftentimes softened down to amiability, if the dinner be a good one.

Silvester Langdale had never dined with a lord. In the first place, there was no lord in the old city to dine with,

although there were several resident in the county, but they were only known in the old city as people who should be held in awe, and who were expected occasionally only to honour the city with their presence, and even then to flit through it like brilliant social meteors as they were.

Silvester Langdale had once dined with the Mayor of the city at his inaugural feast, and he retained a lively recollection that he did not enjoy himself at the banquet; for the citizens who happened to sit around him were rather impulsive in their feeding, and were almost ravenous after the good things on the table. The interesting citizen who sat immediately opposite to him was impressively stout, and peas being in season at the time, he had an unpleasant habit of shovelling them down his capacious throat with his knife, which in the operation for a

moment completely disappeared from sight,—as completely, indeed, as if the man had been Ramo Samee himself. Then after dinner the stout citizen breathed so exceedingly hard, that the expression of his countenance became unpleasantly suggestive of a sanguineous determination towards the head. He was clearly, however, a man of weight in more respects than one, as Silvester Langdale inferred from the respect and attention that were paid to him by those decayed citizens who were charitably employed as waiters on the occasion. Silvester, however, had no doubt about the matter when, the cloth having been drawn, and the wine and dessert placed on the table, the plethoric citizen was called upon to propose the toast of "the Sheriff." The stout citizen ponderously rose, and discharged the duty in a thick, unctuous voice; and his words rolled out greasily

and wholly unfettered by those rigid trammels which grammatical accuracy imposes. He proposed the toast in a brief but highly complimentary speech, and he concluded by informing the assembled guests that "the gentleman whose health he was proposing was one as he was proud to know, and was a honour to the city, for he could say what very few could, that by his own exertions he had rose from the very dregs of society." Whether the sheriff felt gratified by this especial reference of his honourable friend to his early history, Silvester Langdale had no means of knowing, but he could not fail to observe that the good intentions of the plethoric citizen caused much amusement to his worship the Mayor and his friends around him.

As the time for preparation for the visit to Lord Montalban approached, there is no doubt that Silvester Langdale

felt considerable embarrassment. He certainly felt far more nervous than he did when he went down to the court to make his *début* at the bar on the previous day, for he was about to make his appearance in a circle of which he knew nothing from experience, and in which he might possibly have to stand isolated, as it were. This thought, however, brought a slight flush into his countenance,—not, certainly, arising out of a feeling of nervousness or embarrassment, but from that pride which places men of widely different social status upon a footing of equality. The passing thought that he might be received—not by his host, but by those who would be around his host—with the *hauteur* of patronage and condescension, roused that pride within him, and seemed to nerve him for his advent to a new sphere. He had assumed that there were to be other guests besides himself at Lord Mont-

alban's, and yet he had no warrant for such an assumption, because Lord Montalban himself had said nothing about it, and of course nobody else had. Indeed, if Silvester Langdale had reasoned at all upon the matter, he would have inferred that the probability was that there would be no other guests, considering the manner of the invitation he had received, and the brevity of the interval between the time it was given and the time to which it referred. Silvester Langdale, however, had not reasoned upon the matter; his mind was full of glowing hopes and bright aspirations: the *début* of yesterday had opened to his mental view a brilliant future, and he was naturally dazzled by it; and so he had not, as probably he would otherwise have done, occupied his thoughts exclusively with the invitation he had received from Lord Montalban. That invitation had, so to speak, blended

with the picture which had opened to his mental vision, and he had from the first moment associated it with a brilliant gathering. He was invited to dine with a nobleman whom he had never seen until yesterday, and had scarcely ever heard of. His fancy, however, was not altogether in antagonism with the reality, for it so happened that Lord Montalban had previously invited a small party to dinner on this particular day.

The Marquis of Milltown was one of the guests; and when he was introduced to Silvester Langdale, he placed himself before the young barrister so as to exhibit his magnificently and artistically constructed clothes to the fullest advantage, and smiled inanely upon him. The smile, however, had just sufficient expression in it to indicate that the brilliant Marquis felt personally gratified in making the acquaintance of Silvester Langdale. He

had seen by the papers of that morning that Langdale had made a brilliant defence for a fighting man, and had got him off; and so Silvester was a great character in his eyes in consequence, not so much because he had made a brilliant speech — perhaps not at all on that account,—but because he had associated himself with a pugilist.

"How d'ye do? So glad to see you," said the Marquis, extending three of his fingers to Silvester Langdale. "You managed to get Abel Barnes off, I see."

Silvester bowed in acknowledgment.

"Sorry I wasn't there to hear it," the Marquis was pleased to say; "but the fact is, Barnes has been so often licked that I didn't feel inclined. Sorry I didn't, though, now."

And the noble Marquis turned laughingly away towards a large glass, and

became wholly absorbed in the contemplation of his clothes.

Silvester Langdale had never seen such a magnificent figure as that of Miss Montalban; and until that moment when he gazed upon her face he had never known what true and unalloyed female beauty was — at least those were the instantaneous impressions that were produced upon his mind when he was introduced to Lord Montalban's daughter. That introduction certainly for the moment made him feel nervous.

The other guests were high and aristocratic, of course. There was a member of the House of Commons, who entered that assembly thirty years ago as a staunch member of the country party, had never swerved from one special political line, was a magnate amongst farmers, had gradually expanded in obesity, and from a county squire had

blossomed into a baronet. He was famous in the House for a loud, boisterous voice, an expansive waistcoat, and a power of bellowing down a speaker which no other member could exhibit.

One of the guests was a foreigner, Count Moule, a tall man, of about forty years of age; very slight in figure, which was exceedingly upright and good; a sharp, thin face, and raven black whiskers, moustache, and hair. He spoke English with scarcely a tinge of a foreign accent. The most remarkable peculiarity, however, about him perhaps was his hand, which was delicately white, the fingers thereof being rather long and tapering. While he was speaking, he exhibited a peculiar restlessness about the hands, which he seemed to move floatingly about, as it were. They appeared to float upon the air as he moved them, as though they were, in some mysterious way, self-

supporting. You could see that they were soft—a softness that was suggestive of the paw, which at one moment feels like velvet, and in the next puts forth claws that are like steel.

The other guests were proudly aristocratic, highly connected—some of them very rich, and all very insignificant.

Silvester Langdale felt perfectly at his ease in this, to him, strange company, and he scrutinizingly observed them all. At dinner he was placed between the Marquis of Milltown and a grandly made-up maiden lady of fifty-three—tall, gaunt, bony, and evidently strong-minded, with a power and a determination to maintain the dignity of her rank—she was the sister of an earl—not frequently met with even in the circles of society that are up above. In the youthful days of this lady, however, Mrs. Candour had been very busy with her reputation, which,

happily, being of a vigorous constitution, had flourished on notwithstanding. There was, however, but little doubt that Mrs. Candour had something to do with the celibacy of the tall lady seated next to Silvester Langdale, for she had frequently maliciously observed that men might marry widows, as they did every day; but for her part she also observed, that as a rule they did not much care about marrying a woman that was neither one thing nor another. And then she would laugh, and say that the world was very censorious truly.

There, between these two, the Marquis and the sister of an earl, Silvester Langdale got on tolerably well. The earl's sister was quite patronizing to him, and the Marquis of Milltown talked inanely about the odds at the Corner, a wonderful terrier that a friend of his had got, and a doubt in his own mind—which he hoped

by great exertion to solve—whether he should start a dog-cart instead of a cab.

There was nothing particularly remarkable about the dinner, which was rich and elegant. When the ladies had withdrawn, the county member with the expansive waistcoat pushed the decanters along with great regularity and swiftness.

"Langdale," exclaimed the host, suddenly breaking into a new subject of conversation, "I never heard anything more brilliant than your speech yesterday, and yet I am told it was your first appearance at the bar."

"True, my lord, it was my first appearance in a new character."

"And do you intend to confine yourself to practise in that court?" Lord Montalban inquired.

"I trust not," replied Langdale. "In November I hope to make my bow at Westminster."

"What, come into our House?" inquired the baronet with the waistcoat, meaning by the phrase "our House" the House of Commons.

"Not at present," said Silvester Langdale; "although by-and-bye, perhaps, I may spur on my ambition for such a goal."

"I had a couple of boroughs once," said Lord Montalban, "but somehow they seem to have slipped imperceptibly away."

"You were never half political enough," the expansive waistcoat observed, as he peeled a peach, and, first removing the stone, put the whole of it into his capacious mouth at once. "You always years ago thought more of field sports and the allurements of female charms than politics. Look at me."

Well, he was something to look at, certainly. His great round head seemed

to have expanded under the influence of the wine and dessert, for he was equally busy with both; but of course it was no ordinary supply that was required for the support of that expansive waistcoat.

"When I was a young man I swore that I'd be a kind of political pickaxe in the side of the reforming whip, and, ecod! I've kept my oath; and look at me now. I'll bet an even thousand this minute that I'll go down to the House, and from my usual place on the second opposition bench I'll put down any man—I don't care who he is—that is at the time speaking,—in what time shall I say?—in ten minutes. There now! I call that being a power in the State; but I could only have obtained it by beginning early. You, on the contrary, were gallivanting after boarding-school Misses at Brighton."

Lord Montalban laughed, and said Sir

Timothy always was and always would be censorious.

"Censorious! Not a bit of it," cried Sir Timothy, with his mouth full of jargonelle; "it's all true. Only I recollect that it was the talk of our club twenty years ago that you had boasted that you would carry off three girls from a Brighton boarding-school in three months. I recollect also that you didn't do it, though; you only carried off one, but you said she was worth any three others, so you satisfied your conscience in that way."

"Ah, those are days gone by, Sir Timothy, never to return," said Lord Montalban, with something like a sigh, but in no way attempting to deny the truth of the reminiscence which Sir Waistcoat had favoured them with.

Count Moule, who had spoken very little, observed that he thought it might

be taken as conceded that his lordship and Sir Timothy represented two different kinds of intrigue, which, however, he believed were very often combined in the same person—he meant political intrigue and amorous intrigue.

"I have been told that they are almost invariably associated, although, like all other rules, it has its exception, for have we not Sir Timothy here?" said Lord Montalban, laughing.

"And which is yours? or have you got them both, Count?" Sir Timothy inquired.

The Count shrugged his shoulders, and his fingers floated on the air. He smiled significantly, but he made no answer in words to the query that had been put to him.

Count Moule was an intriguer, but in quite a different line from the two that had been indicated by Sir Timothy. His

was a still more subtle intrigue, for it bordered frequently upon something more venal, and it had to do frequently with a passion in the female heart—a passion that, when once implanted, grows imperceptibly; a dishonourable passion too, that flourishes sometimes in an otherwise pure heart; a passion that prostrates the will, especially where that will has always been unchecked and yielded to; a passion that exists and expands sometimes even where female purity in all other regards exists in all its chasteness in the human heart.

The Marquis of Milltown felt that the subject under discussion was either far above him or infinitely beneath him—it matters little which—and so he did not attempt to throw any light upon it at all. He was, however, struck with a novel idea, and he gave expression to it in these words—

"If a fellah dresses to the point I don't think there need be much intrigue, if he minds what he is about. So what do you say to our joining the ladies?"

The brilliant Marquis could not have made a more welcome proposition to Silvester Langdale, who, truth to say, was not much gratified by the tone of the conversation of those around him. It was sufficient to enable him, he thought, to judge of their characters. It was palpable enough that Lord Montalban had been a libertine in his youth, whatever he was now, and it required little discernment to discover that he was self-satisfied with his own antecedents in that respect.

CHAPTER XII.

MISS MONTALBAN AND SILVESTER LANGDALE.

SILVESTER LANGDALE found himself seated by the side of Miss Montalban in the drawing-room, near to one of the open windows that looked out upon the Park, from which there proceeded the peculiar hum that issues from a distant crowd, and which is more palpable on a summer evening than at any other time.

"Are you fond of racing?" Miss Montalban inquired of Silvester Langdale, rather abruptly.

"I have never been upon a racecourse more than three times in my life," he replied.

"Do you hunt?" she asked.

"I have never seen a pack of hounds," he answered, laughing.

"Dear me! where have you lived?" she said, elevating her beautiful eyebrows.

"I have been immured in the country all my life."

"Well, you could not follow the hounds in town. You can have hunting only in the country."

And Miss Montalban looked upon Silvester with an expression upon her countenance as of pity; perhaps that was her feeling.

As Silvester Langdale gazed upon that beautiful face—beautiful and intellectual too, tinged, as it was, with an almost imperceptible shade of melancholy—he felt perplexed at the questions she had just put to him.

"I may infer, then," he said, "that you are attached to the sports of the field?"

"Ardently," she replied, a beaming smile mantling over her noble countenance.

"I have no doubt I should have been so if the opportunity of indulging the predilection had been thrown in my way," said Silvester.

"But you say you have been on a racecourse two or three times," Miss Montalban observed.

"Yes, our own racecourse down in the country," he answered.

"And where is that?"

"Sabrinister."

"I know it well," she exclaimed, almost enthusiastically—"its beautiful racecourse, its noble country, and its gallant steeple-chase."

"Oh, I saw the steeple-chase there once," Silvester Langdale said.

"I have been three times there," cried Miss Montalban, quickly; "and as I stood upon that Stand to watch the

contest, do you know that I felt an almost irresistible impulse to jump down from it into the ring below?"

"Dear me! why?" exclaimed Silvester Langdale, in a tone of alarm.

Miss Montalban laughed, and said that Mr. Langdale looked as though she were really then going to take the perilous leap she had spoken of.

"It was the first time I had seen a steeple-chase," she explained; "and do you know that, as I saw that phalanx of daring horsemen come dashing down the course to take the water-jump, my heart bounded within me, and I wished at the moment——what do you think I wished at that moment?" she inquired, smilingly, of Silvester Langdale.

The young barrister ventured to suppose that it was a wish that all the horses would get over the leap safely.

"Nothing of the sort," she cried, hastily,

as though such a wish would have been puerile. "No, I wished at that moment to be one amongst them," she exclaimed, while her eyes bore sparkling evidence of the fervency of her declaration.

"You must indeed be attached to the chase," said Silvester Langdale, with almost a scared look, for the declaration had quite astounded him.

"The chase!" she cried; "yes, I madly love it. You don't, you say?"

"No, no, no, I did not say that," cried Silvester Langdale; "I meant to say that I have had no experience in connexion with it."

"One so clever as you ought to love the sports of the field. I should like you all the better if you did," she said, playfully, and, as it seemed to Silvester Langdale, tenderly and hopefully.

What is the matter with you, Silvester Langdale?—you who went through that

trying ordeal in the Court in the City yesterday; you who stood unabashed before the scrutinizing eyes of captious and jealous critics; you who had so nobly achieved a great triumph, why do you feel a tremor now? why does the beating of your heart appear to check your breath? and how is it that you feel a flush of something like jealousy as the Marquis of Milltown saunters across the room, and takes a seat on the other side of Miss Montalban? Why, it is no novel sensation in itself, although it may be to you, Silvester Langdale, because that sensation is almost universal in the breast of man; it is felt and recognised the wide world over. You are in love, young man, as you will find before twenty-four hours have passed over your head; so madly in love that the object of your passion will sit as empress over that queen whom you till now believed was ruling

over all your soul under the title of Ambition.

"The inane puppy!" Silvester Langdale thought to himself, as the Marquis of Milltown inquired of Miss Montalban which day she intended to go to Goodwood.

"Because you know," the Marquis said, "I shall go down with you; and if I decide upon the dog-cart, I shall drive it for the first time in Goodwood Park. That will be something, wont it?"

"We intend to go on the Saturday previously," Miss Montalban said.

"Oh dear me!" cried the Marquis of Milltown, "how particularly unfortunate!"

"Indeed! Why?"

"Why, Tattersall's will meet on Monday, you know, and I shall be anxious to know if our friend 'Peeping Tom' rides easily in the market," the Marquis replied, twisting his moustache.

"Will you go to Goodwood, Mr. Langdale?" Miss Montalban inquired, turning to Silvester.

"Oh, I wish you would; 'pon my soul I do," interposed the Marquis; "and you can have a seat in the dog-cart, you know."

Silvester Langdale's mind was made up on the instant, and he recklessly promised that he would go.

"Oh, papa," cried Miss Montalban to her father, "Mr. Langdale says he will go with us to Goodwood."

"I am sure I shall be delighted;" and as Lord Montalban said this it was plain enough that he meant what he said. "By-the-bye, that reminds me that I have received a note from Baskerville, in which he says he has got our money on 'Peeping Tom,' but at ridiculously short prices."

"Baskerville!" exclaimed Silvester Langdale, involuntarily.

"Yes, Marl Baskerville," replied Lord Montalban. "He's a friend of yours, you know, because he was the man who gave you your first brief, and introduced you to the world, I am sure I may say it now, the most rising young man at the bar."

Silvester Langdale scarcely heeded the compliment, as he said, smiling—

"I did not know that his professional avocations embraced that kind of business."

"Oh, you'll know him better by-and-bye. Why, that is his chief business—that and money-lending."

"And a devilish fine thing he makes of it, I am told," joined in Sir Timothy. "True spirit of a miser, I believe—always brooding over his gold."

"I know him too," observed Count Moule; "and I think you are in error when you say that he broods over his

gold. I believe that it is something else that he broods over. He is one of the shrewdest men I have ever met with; one of the cleverest, I may say. Yet do you know that I think he has a slight touch of lunacy?"

"Indeed! Why do you think that?" Lord Montalban inquired.

"Well, it may be only fancy of mine," said the Count, "although I don't think it is; and if I am right in my conjecture, it is that kind of brooding lunacy which, feeding upon itself, as it were, frequently in the end breaks out into suicide or some fearful crime."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Miss Montalban; "you do not mean to say that the Marl Baskerville who comes here sometimes is that kind of man?"

"It may be a mere suspicion of mine, a mere fancy," said the Count.

"I shall always feel alarmed when I see him," said Miss Montalban.

"Oh, I think you need not," the Count said.

"Well, I don't think he looks anything like a lunatic myself," said the Marquis of Milltown, drawlingly.

Probably, if the two had stood side by side at the moment, the conclusion with regard to the powers of mind of the two would not have been to the advantage of the Marquis.

"But why do you think there is anything of the lunatic about Baskerville?" inquired Lord Montalban. "As you have remarked, I have always understood that he was considered one of the shrewdest men on town."

"And that is so," returned Count Moule; "but madness is sometimes linked with the greatest shrewdness."

"Ah, that I don't believe," observed

Sir Timothy. "You can't have the two combined; it's all stuff to say so."

"What is that one of your poets says about great wit being nearly allied to madness?" Count Moule inquired.

"Oh, I know nothing about that," answered Sir Timothy; "but this I do know, that to say Marl Baskerville is anything like a lunatic is to say that a handsome man is a monkey," and he quite accidentally turned his head to the Marquis of Milltown, who said—

"That's true enough."

"You have given us no reasons for your opinion, Count, with regard to Marl Baskerville," said Lord Montalban.

"It is scarcely an opinion," the Count replied; "it's an impression merely."

"But why the impression?"

"I have been thrown a good deal with him," observed the Count.

"Yes, we know that well enough,"

said Lord Montalban, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"And I feel convinced from observation that there is something weighing upon his mind beyond the passing anxiety of the hour," the Count observed.

"May be so—thousands upon thousands are in the same category—but that is not madness," said Lord Montalban.

"True enough; but although we do not recognise in such permanent impression any indication of lunacy, yet in some minds, and I may add in the man of great strength of mind especially, such impressions have a tendency towards madness."

"Towards melancholy, or moroseness, if you like," said Lord Montalban.

"Call it what you please," the Count said, smiling.

"That means that you still adhere to your opinion," said Lord Montalban.

Count Moule indicated by a motion of his shoulders that he agreed with Lord Montalban in that deduction.

"And still you have not told us why?" said Lord Montalban, interrogatively.

"I have already told you that it is an impression of mine," replied the Count, smiling.

"And something more, as I take it," suggested Lord Montalban.

"An inference of your own that, my lord," and the Count still smiled as he spoke.

"Have you studied madness?" abruptly asked Sir Timothy of the Count.

"No, I certainly can't say that I have made it a study; I am merely speaking, as I have said, of general impressions."

"Do you think there are outward and visible signs indicating veiled lunacy?" asked Lord Montalban.

"Such has been an impression pro-

duced upon my mind by association with Marl Baskerville," said the Count.

"Then you are no man of penetration, Count," Lord Montalban replied. "You have merely mistaken a rugged exterior in Marl Baskerville as an indication of some settled purpose, or some gnawing internal passion. Now, Count, you are altogether right and altogether wrong, strange as it may sound to say so," and Lord Montalban laughed as he spoke. "Marl Baskerville has a settled purpose undoubtedly, but it has nothing whatever to do with the past, it has reference only and wholly to the present, and that purpose is to get money."

"And what's the most remarkable part of it is," joined in the Marquis of Milltown, as though he had made a wonderful discovery; "whenever I do anything for a friend or myself it's sure to come into his hands—extraordinary, ain't it?" and

the brilliant Marquis immediately retired under the strain of this mental effort, and looked out of the window towards the Park.

Silvester Langdale had listened to the conversation with much interest, but he had taken no part in it. From what little he had seen of Marl Baskerville, he thought there was very little real foundation for the impression which Count Moule had expressed, and it struck him that if Marl Baskerville was to be taken as a lunatic, there were but very few sane men at large in society.

"Still, after what you have said, Count," said Lord Montalban, pursuing the subject, "I will certainly try and observe a little more closely the peculiarities of Marl Baskerville the next time I see him."

"And in all probability you will fail to discover the indications to which I have alluded," the Count said.

"In all probability!" exclaimed Lord Montalban; "I am sure of it."

The shadows of the summer evening have closed over the Park, and the curtains have been drawn. The drawing-room is brilliantly lighted, and as the night advances a portion of the party sit down to cards. Amongst the card party are Lord Montalban himself, the Count, Sir Timothy, the Marquis of Milltown, and Miss Montalban, who, Silvester Langdale observes, plays eagerly. He also observes that the whole party play for very heavy stakes, and that the Count appears to be particularly lucky.

It is late in the evening before they rise from the card-tables, and then Miss Montalban appears much flushed. They have risen earlier than they would have done, for there is an important discussion in the House of Commons that is to be brought to a close that evening, and Sir

Timothy must go down to lend his voice to the Opposition, and the Marquis of Milltown to vote with him. And so they take their leave to attend to that sacred duty which their country demands of them.

Silvester Langdale finds himself again by the side of Miss Montalban, and they walk up and down the room. Seeing a small and elegant piano open, Silvester says he is sure Miss Montalban is a lover of music.

"Why?" she inquires, with a pleased smile.

"Because I have been told that all who are fond of field sports are ardent lovers of music."

"I never heard of the association before," she said, "but in my case it is true enough, for I am passionately fond of music."

Silvester Langdale indicated by a move-

ment of his hand that the piano was open.

"Oh, I am but an indifferent performer," she said, at once taking her seat at the piano, and running her fingers over the keys.

"Shall I play only, or shall I sing?" she inquired.

It is scarcely necessary to record Silvester Langdale's answer, or the tone in which it was given; agreeably, however, Miss Montalban sang an exquisite air to the following words:—

"The morn may break in brightest hue,
The sun may rise in glory bright,
Undimm'd by e'en a fleeting cloud
To mar the glory of his light;
But yet the noon such clouds may show,
And o'er that brightness shadows fling.
So we on earth can never know
The sorrows that an hour may bring.

"Then let us live prepared for all,
With resignation's solace sweet;
So that, whate'er perchance may fall,
The blow we may with courage meet.

To all alike Fate's arrows fly,
And all-unerring is her wing;
We know not, when dark care is nigh,
The solace that an hour may bring."

As he went home Silvester Langdale felt himself in a delirium of delight, and the cadence of that half-melancholy song rang in his ears the whole night through.

CHAPTER XIII.

SILVESTER LANGDALE FORGES HIS FIRST CHAIN.

As Silvester Langdale lay in his bed awake the next morning—and he was awake early enough; as soon, indeed, as it was light, early as that was—the events of the last two days appeared to him like a glorious dream. Only in that short space of time he had accomplished without any exertion of his own, that which some men toil through half their lives for, and even then do not always obtain the object sought. "Surely there must be an inscrutable chance in all this," Silvester Langdale reasoned with himself, "although

it were idle to inquire whence good fortune—that which is really good fortune—springs. If poor Margale had not sent for me to be the witness of his death-bed scene, I might have struggled on almost hopelessly. I can see it; and no such chance for me might have arisen as that of Abel Barnes being arraigned on a charge of manslaughter. But that a man cannot be reckless unless he has a natural bent that way, these strange chances of the last two days might make me recklessly confident as to the future."

Thus reasoned Silvester Langdale to himself, as he lay dreamily awake on his bed, arguing with himself, indeed, that he was not recklessly confident as to the future—congratulating himself upon the absence in himself of that recklessness, little dreaming in this waking dream that by so reasoning he was taking the first step towards that recklessness with regard

to the future which he was congratulating himself upon having avoided: that self-congratulation was a delusion indeed.

The recent past was bright in the mind of Silvester Langdale, but it was not half so bright as that future which he could, with so much to justify himself in doing so, picture to himself; for since yesterday—since last night, something had arisen before his mind, and taken possession of it, which was not ambition, although it was something like it; but it was more akin to hope. The form of Augusta Montalban was present in his mind as something to hope for beyond his own ambition; something separate and apart from it, if it could be so. His ambition had suddenly taken a new form. Yesterday its object was that he should be famous in his new profession, an object wholly confined to himself; now, as he

lay upon his bed dreaming, yet awake, his ambition was gradually assuming a new form, or rather a new motive, that of being really worthy of Augusta Montalban. And how fantastic is the mind of youth under such circumstances! Silvester Langdale was thinking over his conversation with Miss Montalban the night before; and already was he resolved, in order to gratify her, as he thought, to become a horseman, and to ride to hounds, and to take an interest in the sports of the turf,—he who, but a few minutes previously, had been reasoning with himself upon his prosperity, and indulging in self-gratulation that his brilliant success, so rapid and yet so unequivocal, had not in any way led him to a tendency to recklessness. Why, all the impulses of youth are reckless mostly.

Yes, he has resolved to become a horseman, and to be conspicuous in the field;

in fact, he is vigorously heating the iron with which to forge those links that shall form the first chain that, as a Man in Chains, he will have to wear.

For a moment, amidst the glowing retrospect and the dazzling future, as he contemplates them, his thoughts wander to the old schoolroom, in that grim old house far away in the ancient city, from which he seems to have been separated by a long interval of time, and he resolves that he will write to his old friend and protector and guide, with an account of his success, and the strange means by which it had been achieved; and he rises from his bed for the purpose, although it is so early that nobody is astir, and the sounds of passing traffic in Gray's Inn Lane are only fitful, and not in volume yet sufficient to drown the merry carolling of the birds that are in revelry, on this bright summer morning, in the big trees

that were planted when green fields were all around them.

Silvester Langdale has fully attired himself, but he does not sit down at his desk; for, in truth, he has forgotten the impulse which had induced him to rise. He walks up and down his chamber, and as he muses thus he is again in the drawing-room in Park-lane, and listening to those words and those tones that have sunk into his heart, there to illuminate it with a brilliancy that it has hitherto unknown.

At length his eye rests on a thick brief that had been sent him the previous evening, and at the sight of it his old ambition —it is old now to him, although but forty-eight hours ago it was but dawning upon him—holds for the moment dominion over his mind. He sits at his desk, and untying the brief, begins to peruse its contents, in which occupation he speedily becomes

absorbed, and so the early morning passes.

Silvester Langdale had altogether forgotten the appointment that he had made to receive the son of Abel Barnes as his clerk; but the boy's father and mother, and the boy himself, had not, for as the clock struck nine they, in accordance with the appointment, were at the door; and it did Silvester's heart good to see them. He had a kindly, generous heart; easily impressioned, it is true, but sterling to its core. The appearance of all three was changed materially—the boy's especially, because he was in his new attire; and the father and mother were changed in their looks and in the expression of their faces. Their attire was unchanged. The woman in particular looked happier; indeed, she almost looked cheerful; and as Silvester Langdale gazed upon her countenance, he thought that in her youth she must have

been exceedingly handsome; and then the thought seemed suddenly to strike him, as though it had never occurred to him before, that she was Margale's sister.

"What is your name?" Mr. Langdale inquired of the boy.

"Barnes," replied the boy.

"Yes, of course I know that," said Silvester, smiling; "but I mean your other name."

"Severn Barnes, sir."

"Very good; then you can enter on your duties at once, the principal of which will be to attend upon me;" and then turning to the burly form of the pugilist, he said: "And I shall see if I cannot arrange something for you, Barnes."

"I would go to the end of the earth to serve you," joyfully exclaimed Abel Barnes; and his wife added: "That I am sure he would, sir."

"Do you understand anything about horses?" Silvester Langdale inquired.

"I do, sir; I've had plenty to do with 'em in my time," was the reply.

"Then you can serve me, and I will tell you how to-morrow morning, if you will be here about this time. I cannot wait now, as the time for opening the court is approaching, and I have more 'business there."

"And them poor devils will be glad enough to see you, I'll warrant," cried the pugilist, with a lively recollection, probably, of his own feelings on a recent occasion.

Silvester Langdale smiled at the heartiness and the form of the expression of Abel Barnes; and then turning to the boy, he said: "You know your way to the Old Bailey?"

"Oh, yes," replied the boy; "we live close there, you know, sir."

"Very well, then; take my bag down there, and ask for the robing-room, and there wait until I come."

The boy took the bag with great alacrity, and, with something like pride in his new position, he prepared to go. Abel Barnes said he would accompany him, for it was all in the way home; "But," he said, turning to Mr. Langdale respectfully, "it wont be our home after this afternoon."

"I am glad to hear it," said Silvester Langdale; "it must be a rather melancholy place for you."

"It is, sir; but the people round, sir, have treated us very well; and it was your speech, sir, that did it all with them."

The man and his wife would fain have showered expressions of their gratitude upon Silvester Langdale, but the poor pugilist did not know how to frame them, and the wife felt her heart too full to do so.

Abel Barnes said he would be sure to be with Mr. Langdale in the morning, and in a few minutes afterwards the pugilist and his wife and their son were gleefully congratulating themselves on their change of fortune, as they made their way down Holborn.

In the afternoon, when Silvester Langdale returned to his chambers, his new clerk having been sent on previously, he found Marl Baskerville waiting for him.

"The very man I wished to see," said the barrister, eagerly; "I dined with Lord Montalban last night."

"So I have seen," said Baskerville.

"Seen where? and how?" inquired the young man.

"Why, in the papers, of course."

"The papers! what papers?"

"The morning papers. You have seen them yourself, surely?"

"No, I have not had an opportunity of looking at them to-day."

"So full of business already, eh?" said Baskerville, smiling; "I thought that would be the result. Well, in the papers this morning they chronicle the fact that Lord Montalban had a dinner-party last night, consisting of the Marquis of Milltown, Count Moule, Sir Timothy Wurzell, Bart., M.P., and Silvester Langdale, Esq., the new barrister, who made such a sensation the other day in his defence of a well-known character. Fame, you see, Mr. Langdale, comes in large waves when it comes effectually."

But Silvester Langdale did not hear this last observation, for he had seized the newspaper which he had not that day previously looked at, and was in search of the gratifying paragraph to which Marl Baskerville had referred. He speedily found it, and read it with glowing eyes.

"I referred to the fact of my dining there the moment I saw you," said Silvester Langdale to Baskerville, "because Lord Montalban, in mentioning your name last night, intimated that you are in the habit—that is, that you occasionally—a——" said Silvester Langdale.

"Advance money? was that it?" Marl Baskerville inquired, with a meaning look.

"Exactly," said Langdale.

"And you would like to raise some?" Marl Baskerville suggested, as though he were speaking of the most commonplace matter possible.

"Do you think I should be justified in borrowing some money?" Silvester Langdale inquired, rather tremulously.

"Perfectly," Marl Baskerville replied. "You have got the ball at your feet, and the game is your own."

"And you will do it for me?"

"Nay, I did not say that."

Silvester Langdale's countenance fell.

"Did Lord Montalban tell you that I advance money myself?" Baskerville inquired of Langdale.

"He did."

"He was in error, then,—an error which people are very apt to fall into."

Silvester Langdale felt humiliated,—not so much at having intimated his necessities to Mark Baskerville, as at having made that intimation, as he thought, fruitlessly. Marl Baskerville sat with his back to the window of the chamber, so that the light should fall full upon the countenance of the young man, and not upon his own. Those who knew him well said that he always did this when in consultation with any one upon matters of business. He would seem to have read at a glance what was passing in the mind of Silvester Langdale, and he said,—

"He was in error in saying that I do this myself, although it is true enough that I am the means by which it is frequently done."

Silvester Langdale's countenance brightened.

"And I have no doubt that I can be the means of doing it in your case, Mr. Langdale."

Silvester Langdale's countenance was full of glowing anticipation again.

"What amount do you require?" Marl Baskerville inquired.

"You think that I shall get plenty of business, don't you?" Silvester Langdale asked.

"I am convinced of it."

"Well, then, in November I may reasonably calculate upon being in ample funds?"

"I think you may."

"Under those circumstances, then, it

will scarcely be considered unreasonable or extravagant that I should require three hundred pounds."

As he said this Silvester Langdale looked eagerly into the countenance of Marl Baskerville, to see if he could discover what impression the statement of his requirements had made. But much older men than he in the ways of the world had failed to read impressions in Marl Baskerville's countenance, even when the light was shining accidentally fully upon it, which it was not doing now.

"I think you may, considering your prospects, reasonably borrow that sum," said Marl Baskerville, in a measured tone, and in a voice that seemed impervious to emotion.

"And may I ask you to give me your assistance, Mr. Baskerville?"

"I need not tell you, Mr. Langdale,"

said Baskerville, "that I never do anything upon impulse. My course of life is purely one of hard business; I do nothing except as business. But in your case I confess to something just outside the pale of business,—a feeling which I cannot explain or describe. In short, it is one of confidence in your prospects. The proof of that confidence is easily shown. By a remarkable coincidence I happen to have about me the exact sum that you require, for I was on my way to execute a commission to that amount for Lord Montalban. [This was not true.] I can do it as well in the morning as this evening. Till November, you say?"

"Till November, when you know the courts at Westminster will commence their sittings."

"It is now July;—that is three months, then," said Baskerville.

Silvester Langdale did not trouble him-

self to make the calculation, but at once answered,—

"Yes."

"You have not got a bill stamp, I suppose?"

"No, I have not," said Silvester Langdale, laughing. "I never had such a thing in my life."

"And I don't think I have got one," said Marl Baskerville, unconcernedly, and looking into his pocket-book. "Oh, here is one: shall I draw the bill?"

"Do so, if you please."

And Marl Baskerville drew up the binding document, saying,—

"I draw it, you know, for £350,"—at the same time taking notes to the extent of £300 out of the book.

It was that morning that, while lying in bed, Silvester Langdale had congratulated himself upon not being reckless as to the future, and yet he signed this

document without thought, and by his signature struck a blow that clenched the binding link of the first chain that was to coil round him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE YOUNG BARRISTER TAKES ABEL BARNES INTO HIS CONFIDENCE AND HIS SERVICE. — SEVERN BARNES IS HEARD A LITTLE MORE CONSPICUOUSLY IN THIS HISTORY.

Silvester Langdale in his early life had had but little money, of course; indeed, he had not required much. The household of old Nicholas Darvill was a very simple one; its wants were few, and anything approaching to extravagance was unknown within it. Langdale, as we have already said, had been studious in his youth, and had not mixed much in the society which the old cathedral town afforded. He was, therefore, not very much experienced in

the ways of the world, and yet now that he had arrived in London, and was moving in its great vortex, he seemed intuitively to be experienced in some of its courses. In fact, he appeared to have been suddenly transformed from the obscure position of a pupil usher in an obscure school far away down in the country, to something like a man of the world, and one apparently acquainted with its intricacies. This, however, was not the reality, because he was as yet wholly unacquainted with the devious paths of the great world, although he had been dazzled, as it were, into a kind of confidence with regard to them. He was very sanguine as to the future, of course, but surely there could be no stronger proof of his inexperience of the ways of the world than his being at that moment in possession of three hundred pounds, considering the channel and the means by which that

sum had been obtained. If the possession of the money had not engendered a feeling of recklessness in his mind, it had produced something that was very much like it. Although he had never previously been possessed of such a sum of money, yet he acted and planned in his mind as though he had been accustomed to wealth and its disposal. If he did not actually reason with himself that he had opened up a golden mine that was probably inexhaustible, yet did he seem to treat with himself, as it were, as if such had been the case. He rose the next morning after his transaction with Baskerville considerably altered in his feelings. In fact, the events of the three days last past had changed him much,—not in appearance, but with regard to his aspirations and his hopes. He felt that he was no longer a dreamer; a bright reality was at his feet. And then he looked around him,

and was much dissatisfied with his chambers and their locality. This must be the first outward change that he must effect, and so his thoughts wandered towards the Temple Gardens, and he resolved that his footsteps should wander there also as speedily as possible. He was a friend of Lord Montalban's, and he could scarcely ask his noble friend to visit him at Gray's Inn; and he felt a slight flush upon his forehead as the thought suggested itself to his mind of having to give Miss Montalban his present address. And how suggestive was the name of Augusta Montalban! The prospects which were opening upon him would justify him in the endeavour to gain her approbation and applause in Rotten Row, and ultimately in the hunting-field. For that approbation and applause he would dare the perils of the new accomplishment, and—well thought of!—Abel Barnes was

coming that morning. He was well acquainted with horses, and he should purchase one for him, and become his master of the horse. Such a man would be an acquisition to him in more ways than one. Yes, he would create an office for Abel Barnes, so that the man might be constantly near him. Abel Barnes was a good fellow, he knew, and he would befriend him.

Such were the thoughts that were passing almost feverishly through the mind of Silvester Langdale as he was dressing on the morning after his monetary transaction with Marl Baskerville, and they were only partially interrupted by the arrival of Severn Barnes at the appointed time for the commencement of his duties.

"Has your father come with you?" Silvester Langdale inquired of his juvenile clerk.

"He will be here almost directly, sir. He has been helping mother to get into our new place ;—not that it will take him long, sir, for we haven't got much to move," said the boy, with a smile.

"He told me yesterday, I think, did he not, that he has had something to do with horses?" Langdale inquired.

"Oh, yes, sir, he has had a good deal to do with them; in fact, sometimes, when the Derby or the St. Leger is on, he gets some very good pay by going to watch the favourites."

"Watch the favourites? how do you mean?" inquired Silvester Langdale, in a tone of surprise.

"Why, you see, sir, those horses are not always safe in their stables, and so they are obliged to be watched by those who can keep guard over them and protect them. And if anybody attempted to get into the stable, they'd find father

rather an awkward customer, wouldn't they, sir; especially as he has a tremendous big stick for such occasions."

"Oh, that's what I've read of, then, in the newspapers, when great races—in which I take no interest myself—have to come off. I dare say your father has had some experience of the villanies that are practised in that vicious and degraded circle."

"I am sure he has, sir, for he used to make us laugh at some of his adventures when he came home from watching the stables."

This was not exactly what Silvester Langdale meant.

"He used to tell us how the nobblers, as they are called, would try to evade him, and watch their opportunity when they thought he was off his guard,—he watching all the time; and how he would pounce upon them, and thrash them until

they roared again. It must have been prime fun, sir, mustn't it?"

Silvester Langdale could scarcely tell why, but he laughed at what the boy said; and the boy would probably have continued his reference to his father's reminiscences if he had not been prevented by a knock at the door; upon hearing which he said,—

"This is father, I daresay, sir."

And it was Abel Barnes, who, though still attired in his rough and shabby clothes, looked much improved, even from yesterday, in his face. He had a cheery smile, and the careworn look which he exhibited when Silvester Langdale first saw him was gone, and in its place there was a hopeful expression. He said he had attended upon his honour according to appointment.

"Take a seat, Barnes," said Silvester Langdale.

"Your honour's very good and kind, sir, but I can stand. I don't think I ought to sit in your honour's presence."

"Nonsense, man!" said Silvester Langdale, laughing; "sit down; I have got a good deal to say to you."

"Very well, if your honour insists; but it would be a pretty long spell of standing as would tire Abel Barnes, I'm a-thinking."

"Well, I suppose you are pretty well used to standing up;" and Silvester Langdale laughed knowingly.

"It's many a stand up as I've had, sir, it's true," replied Barnes; "but, after all, what good is it? It ain't often as it makes a man much better, and I'm sure it's very often as it makes a man a good deal worse."

"You of course know a good deal about the men in your"—profession, Silvester Langdale was going to say, but a sense

of the ludicrous prevented him, and so he substituted the word—"line?"

"Well, sir, I've seen as much of them as most men, and I think I know them all."

"And what sort of men are they really? I mean——" and Silvester Langdale hesitated, for he scarcely knew how to convey his meaning to the man before him. "I mean, what are they morally or intellectually? Are they bad men, or are they, considering their line of life, as good as others?"

For a moment Abel Barnes looked puzzled, and then said,—

"Some of 'em are very queer indeed, sir; perhaps I might say that some of them are very bad indeed, and not be far out in what I did say."

"Are they a very ignorant class of men generally?"

"That's where it is, you see, sir. Some

of 'em are very so-so in that way, very; and do you know, sir, that I've always noticed that where a man has got his head screwed on the right way, and has had a bit of learning, he always makes a better fighter than the man as can't read nor write? and nearly all of 'em can't."

"I can easily understand that," said Silvester Langdale; "even in such a calling as yours is, intelligence must be of advantage."

"Such a calling as mine is, you said, sir?"

"Yes."

"Beg your pardon, sir, will you kindly correct that, and say, such as mine was?"

Silvester Langdale laughed, and said he was very glad to be able to make the correction as suggested.

"And that reminds me that we may as well change the subject, and discuss the

object I had in view in requesting you to be here this morning. You told me yesterday that you understood horses."

"That I do well, sir."

"I want to buy a horse," said Silvester Langdale, in a kind of hesitating tone, as though he had not as yet quite taken himself into his own confidence, or it was some faint whisper of discretion or prudence that checked the flow of the words in which he had just made the declaration to Abel Barnes. No matter, the determination had been come to—why should not the declaration be made?

"I hope you'll let me do it for you, sir—that is, go with you to buy him. A hack, sir, for your own riding?"

"No, no," replied Silvester, in the same tone of slight hesitation as before; "a hunter."

Abel Barnes elevated his eyebrows.

"Eh, a hunter? I think I know a

good hunter when one comes before me. And you go across country, do you, sir?"

At this question Silvester Langdale felt a great deal more embarrassed than he did on the morning that he made his *début* so successfully in his profession. In the first place, he was not altogether sure that he was quite acquainted with the exact meaning of the phrase, "going across country;" and to have questioned Abel Barnes upon the point seemed ludicrous. He therefore nodded his head in such a manner as to relieve his own conscience in the matter; it was a nod that might mean anything or nothing, although Abel Barnes took it to be one decidedly in the affirmative.

"Where do you hunt, sir?"

This was a direct question that could not be evaded, and so Silvester Langdale nerved himself up to reply,—

"The fact is, Barnes, I don't hunt."

"Sir!" said Abel Barnes, incredulously.

"I may as well tell you at once, Barnes, that I am as ignorant of matters in the hunting-field as I am of pugilism; but I intend to become a huntsman, and I want your assistance both in the purchase of my steed and in his management after I have got him;" and Silvester Langdale laughed as he said this.

Abel Barnes rubbed his hands in glee, and said it was the very thing he should like to do for Silvester Langdale.

"You want a thorough good hunter, do you, sir?" he asked; "well, then, I know a friend as knows where to get a good one, and no coping or chaunting."

"No what?" inquired Silvester Langdale, in utter ignorance of what coping or chaunting meant,—whether those terms had reference to the bad points of a horse

or the bad points of the persons who had horses to sell.

Abel Barnes was quick enough to perceive the extent of Silvester Langdale's ignorance in this respect, and so he explained that coping and chaunting were slang or technical phrases (slang and technical are sometimes synonymous terms) for certain arts and impositions that were practised by persons whose calling was the selling of horses.

"I know a friend who was almost born in a stable, sir, and he has had to do with buying and selling of horses ever since he could walk, and I've only to ask him to do the kind for you, sir, and he'll do it. I'll go to him this very day; he's at a repository in the City."

"You think you can depend upon him, do you?" inquired Silvester.

"I've been acquainted with him all his life, sir; and although I know he's up to

every dodge that can be done in a stable-yard, and can take in anybody that's green better, perhaps, than any other man in in his line, I'm sure that he'd no more think of putting the double on me than he would upon his own father."

To men of the class of the friend to whom Abel Barnes referred, this, perhaps, would not have been considered conclusive as to the *bona fides* of the individual referred to, but it was perfectly satisfactory to Silvester Langdale, who said, "Very well, then, Barnes; will you go and see him this very day, because I want the horse immediately?"

"I'll go down this very minute, sir, and he'll tell me at once if there's a good 'un to be had just now in London."

"Very good, Barnes; I think you had better go at once. But, by-the-bye," said Silvester Langdale, recollecting himself, "I have not made the proposition I

had intended with regard to yourself. I want to take you into my service, if you have no objection to enter."

"Objection, sir!" cried the pugilist, his big, burly face glowing with gratification; "as I said yesterday, do what you like with me, sir, I'll be your slave for evermore: and no more of the ring for me; and no more sporting of any kind, unless your honour likes it."

Silvester Langdale did not give an opinion upon this point, but directed Abel Barnes's attention to the subject of his duties, which would be chiefly to attend upon the young barrister, and to act as his messenger. The matter of remuneration was very speedily settled, for nothing that Langdale could have proposed would, at that moment, have been objected to by Abel Barnes. The terms that his new employer did actually propose he considered munificent; and

when they were agreed upon he almost involuntarily exclaimed, "I've got a turn of luck at last."

"Now, then, away to your friend at the repository in the City, and let me know what he says."

But just at this moment an incident occurred which prevented Abel Barnes immediately proceeding on his mission. The chambers which Silvester Langdale occupied in Gray's Inn consisted of two rooms and a small chamber, which was little better than a closet. Between this closet and the chamber which was Langdale's business office was his bedroom, so that it was at some distance from the chamber in which Langdale and Abel Barnes then were. Just at the moment when Abel Barnes said he would depart on his mission to his friend at the repository in the City, a splendid contralto voice was heard singing the music of a

popular ballad. The voice proceeded from the little closet on the other side of Silvester Langdale's bedroom, and the young barrister listened attentively, while Abel Barnes, with a gratified smile upon his countenance, watched his new master. Silvester Langdale stood listening to the voice, and did not speak until the popular ballad had been performed; and then, turning to Abel Barnes, he said,—

"What a magnificent voice! Where can it be? It cannot be a woman's."

"A woman's, sir!" said Abel Barnes, proudly; "no, sir, it's my Severn."

"Your son, do you mean?"

"Ay, sir, my son. Doesn't he sing splendid?"

Silvester Langdale said the boy had a splendid voice indeed, and the young man went to his room door, and called the boy.

"Was that you I heard singing just

now?" Silvester Langdale inquired of his young clerk.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir; I thought that both the doors were closed, and that you would not hear me. I hope I have not disturbed you, sir?"

"No, my boy, you have not disturbed me,—you have quite delighted me;" and then turning to Abel Barnes, he said, "Away on your errand, Barnes."

And Barnes went away accordingly.

When he was gone Silvester Langdale said to the boy, "Have you ever been instructed in singing?"

"I've had a few lessons, sir, from the leader of the band," the boy replied, modestly, "and I learnt the piano for a short time."

"Who is the leader of the band?"

"At the music hall or the theatre, sir?"

"The one from whom you say you received lessons."

"Oh, I had lessons from both, sir,—the last was at the music hall, and his name is Spaltok."

"And did he express any opinion about your voice?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy diffidently; "he said that mine was the best voice in the choir, and ought to be well cultivated."

Silvester Langdale mused for a moment, and then said,—

"You will see the leader of the band to-night, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, sir, I am sure to see him."

"Will you ask him if he can make it convenient to call upon me some morning?"

"Yes, sir; and I'm sure he will be very proud to do so."

"Tell him I should like to see him; or, if he would prefer it, I will wait upon him."

"I will be sure to do so, sir."

Another knock at the door! More briefs, and from the man—the old practitioner—with the parchment cheeks and the wry mouth. The sessions are very heavy, for there has been more than the usual interval since the last.

The boy clerk has returned to his little closet, to wonder what on earth Mr. Langdale can want to see Mr. Spaltok about; while Silvester Langdale paces his chamber with the firmness of pride in his step. Fortune is indeed smiling upon him, and Abel Barnes's friend shall buy him the best horse he can get. This young Severn Barnes, too, he must not remain simply a barrister's clerk. Silvester Langdale has as this moment several projects, bright in themselves, floating about in his brain. They are great and worthy ones, and he will dash into them impetuously, for wealth will be at his com-

mand now; has he not a foretaste of it already? and is not the sun of fortune shining upon him?

These thoughts are rushing through his mind, and in that rush there is no remembrance for that moment left of Marl Baskerville and the recent loan.

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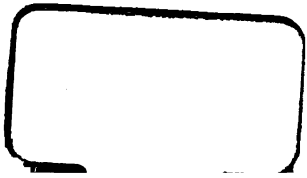
60